





John M. Yalter  
Feb 1957

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Schofield





A  
DISCOURSE  
Concerning the  
RESURRECTION  
OF  
JESUS CHRIST.

IN THREE PARTS.

WHEREIN,

- I. The CONSEQUENCES of the *Doctrine* are Stated Hypothetically.
- II. The *Nature and Obligation* of MORAL EVIDENCE, are explain'd at large.
- III. The *Proofs* of the FACT of our Saviour's Resurrection, are Propos'd, Examin'd, and fairly Demonstrated, to be *Conclusive*.

Together with

An APPENDIX concerning the Impossible Production of *Thought*, from *Matter and Motion*: The Nature of *Human Souls*, and of *Brutes*: The *Anima Mundi*, and the Hypothesis of the TOITAN; as also, concerning *Divine Providence*, the *Origin of Evil*, and the *Universe* in General.

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Ἡγέσθιν ὁ Κύριος ὄντως. Luke xxiv. 34.

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By HUMPHRY DITTON, Master of the New  
Mathematical School in *Christ's-Hospital*.

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The Second Edition.

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T O T H E

Right Reverend Father in God,

J O H N,

Lord Bishop of *Ely*.

My LORD!



Know not to whom a Discourse of *this Nature*, could be more properly inscrib'd, than to a Prelate of the Christian Church, so conspicuous, for a pious Zeal for the *Subject*

it treats of, and of such known Abilities plac'd in an *eminent Station*, as your Lordship is. And I have this peculiar Satisfaction, in having obtain'd the Favour of Your Lordship's Patronage; that tho I am conscious, the Defects in the Performance, cannot easily lie conceal'd from Your Lordship's *Judgment*; yet I am under the Protection of so much *Goodness and Candour*, that I dare be easy, even when I represent Your Lordship to myself, in the severer Posture of an Examiner.

My Design in the following Papers (My Lord) does not go so *low*, as a bare *Vindication* of Christianity; and I should have thought it almost a Crime, to have given them *that Name*. Your Lordship knows, Christianity does not need to be merely *Defended*, after such a Course of *Miraculous Triumphs*, as *Divine Providence* has given it over all the vain *Reason* and *Philosophy*, as well as the *Power* and *Malice* of the World.

Indeed, when the Religion was *Young*, and lay open to Publick Slander and Calumny, then, the humble Method of *Apology*, was every way the most proper and useful. But I know of no Reasons that oblige us, at this time of the  
day

day, to *apologize* for our *Faith*, to the Enemies of Christianity; who tho they have a Right to *civil Usage*, yet are not to be treated with *Form* and *Ceremony*. Not so much, because Christianity has now the *Civil Power* on its side; as because it has victoriously made its way thro all Opposition, by the *bright Evidence of Truth* it carries along with it, and for so many Ages put to silence all the Ignorance of *Gainsayers*. It was for this Reason (My Lord) that I propos'd to do nothing else in this Treatise, but to set the *great Argument of our Saviour's Resurrection*, in a fair Light before them; to shew them upon what unquestionable Principles, they may, if they will, assure themselves that the Doctrine is true; and so leave it entirely to them, to make the *Conclusion* as they shall think fit.

Your Lordship very well knows, *what sort of Answers* use to be return'd, to all Undertakings of this kind; which, as far as I could ever yet find, are reducible, either to *Banter and Ridicule*, or *slight Reflection*, upon Matters remote from the *grand Point in Dispute*. By these Methods indeed, a Controversy may be made *Perpetual*; but then they who make use of them, plainly shew, that it is neither



their *Interest*, nor their *Desire* to have it decided.

I have often thought, My Lord, how *lucky* it is for the Enemies of Christianity under Christian Governments, that the prudent Care of the *Magistrate*, has made it *unsafe* for them to say all, they pretend they have to say, against Reveal'd Religion. For by this means, they not only avoid the Discredit of coming off poorly, after very loud and insolent Boasts; but also get the Reputation of having some very shrewd Objections in *Reserve*, which now 'tis alledg'd, they are forc'd to suppress, for fear of *affronting the Publick*. This is a most happy Co-incidence! And those Gentlemen may think themselves indebted to a *Government*, for such a Favour, as that of refusing them the Liberty, of *Speaking* and *Writing*, as freely as they *think*. Nor does such a *necessary Restraint* as this, any more deserve the odious Name of *Persecution*; than Persecution it self, merits the glorious Title, of *pure Zeal for the Gospel*.

However, My Lord, tho the *very indecent Liberties* that have been taken with Christianity, have justly induc'd those, who have Power in their hands, to  
take

take proper Measures for its Defence, from *open and rude Assaults*; yet I can scarce persuade my self, that any Christian *Protestant* State, would deny Unbelievers of *Reveal'd Religion*, who *shew'd a sincere Desire of being better inform'd*, the Liberty of proposing the *real Scruples of their Minds* in a *convenient, sober and modest way*. And till they have tried to obtain such a Liberty, and been *solemnly refus'd it*; I think it is to no purpose for them to pretend, that their *Mouths* are stop'd by the *Laws of the Country*. For they may argue without Spleen and scurrilous Reflections; and no impartial Person would be angry, to see Men fairly endeavouring after a satisfactory Resolution of their Doubts, in a Case wherein their *Everlasting Happiness* was so nearly concern'd.

May Your Lordship long continue, an *Ornament and Support* to True Religion and useful Learning, the *sure Friend* of the *Poor* and Distress'd, and a vigorous Promoter of all that concerns the Interest and Glory of your *Country*.

And may the Church of *England* ever have, as it has now, such *Pastors* at the Head of it, whose chief Ambition it shall be, to imitate the Sublime Ex-  
A 4
ample,

ample, of the *Great Shepherd and Bishop*  
of *Souls.*

I am,

My LORD,

With all Humble and Sincere Respect,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Most Obedient, and

Devoted Servant,

*Humphry Ditton.*





# P R E F A C E

## T O T H E

# R E A D E R.



*AFTER I had resolv'd upon this Undertaking, and thrown the Materials of which it was to consist, into some Order and Method; the next thing was to consider, in what sort of Form and Dress, it would be most advantageous to present it to the World: Whether I should proceed all along in so very strict, and abstracted a Way, as to say nothing, but what should be either Lemma, Proposition, Scholium or Corollary; or else should take the agreeable Liberty, of mixing the Declamatory, with the strict way of Reasoning, in such Parts of the Discourse, where it should be to some good and useful Purpose, so to do.*

*And I quickly concluded, that the latter Method would be the most Useful and Advantageous in a Design of this Nature. For as all those who are Judges of sound Argument and Reason would as easily find it out, and trace it through all the Parts of a Discourse*

*course compos'd after this manner, as if all was put into the severest and most rigorous Mathematical Form, that could be; so the doing of it that way, would infallibly have given it such a frightful and forbidding Look, that my main End and Scope in the Publication of it, must necessarily have been lost, with respect to the greatest Part of our Readers. The Design I propos'd to my self, was to examine, and enquire into the Truth of this very important Doctrine (the Resurrection of Jesus Christ) in a strict and accurate Way; and at the same time, to render that Enquiry truly useful to all Persons whatsoever. And this End I could never have obtain'd, had I tied my self up, to the strict Form of Proposition, Lemma, &c. in every particular Thing I had occasion to say. For as the Nature and Use of those Things, are known but to very few People, comparatively speaking; so when a Man is wholly confin'd to them, there's many an Opportunity lost, of urging and pressing an Argument home, and making such Applications of it, as tend much more to the enforcing it on the Mind, than the bare proposing of it in a Theorematical Way, ever will or can do.*

*Every Judicious and Intelligent Person knows, that strict Reasoning it self, and the strict Form of Reasoning, are two very different Things. They do by no means necessarily suppose, or infer one another. Strict Reasoning may as well be without the Form, as the Form is often without the just Consequence and Connection of Parts, which alone makes it strict Reasoning. A Declamatory Discourse may be so set together, that by a mere Change of the Dress, it shall become a rigorous Demonstration. As on the other hand, the latter, taken out of the Severities of its own proper Form, may be made to appear with all the soft and pleasant Airs of a Declamation, and yet at the same time preserve the Chain of solid Argument and Truth, strict and entire.*

*In*

*In the following Discourse, I have made it my Business, to examine that great and fundamental Article of the Christian Faith, which is the Subject of it; with the same Impartiality and Care, that I would have done, had I not believ'd it at all; but been only an indifferent and unconcern'd Person, neither prejudic'd on one side in favour of it, nor on the other, with wrong Notions and Dislike. Upon this score, I have not any where scrupled, to make what Concessions appear'd to me to be intrinsically Just and Reasonable, and agreeable to Truth and Matter of Fact. I have no where industriously stift'd or suppress'd any Objections of the adverse Party, which I was conscious of, and really believ'd to deserve Notice. And as I have not conceal'd any Part of their Strength, to make them appear weaker than they are; so neither have I represented any Part of their Strength to a Disadvantage, or set their Reasonings in a false Light, with a design to make them appear worse Reasoners than they are. I have made use of no arbitrary precarious Hypotheses, to build or establish any Conclusions upon; but on the other hand, have studiously avoided arguing upon any such Topicks as are really doubtful and questionable, and endeavour'd all along to keep closely to these two, as my MAIN FOUNDATIONS, viz. PLAIN MATTER OF FACT, AND THE LAWS AND CONSTITUTION OF HUMAN NATURE. And whatever Consequences I have drawn, either against the Deists, or in favour of the Christians, I have drawn them only there, where according to the best of my Judgment, the Eternal Laws of Nature and Reason oblig'd me so to do; and that without any forcing or straining of things, beyond those Bounds, to which the Genuine Scope and Extent of the Principles I argue from, would allow me to carry them.*

*And*

*And for the Proof of this fair and equal Management, I appeal to the Book it self. They that will take the Pains to examine that, with unprejudic'd Judgment and Care, I am sure will acquit me; and they that will not do so, cannot condemn me, without fixing a Reproach upon themselves. I have no more any sort of Motives to byass me to misrepresent, and set Things in a wrong Light; than I have Interest to keep me from owning of Truth, when 'tis evidently made out to me. And therefore, I desire no better Quarter than this, that the Book be read, and maturely consider'd: Nor am I under Apprehensions of anything so much, as I am of Ignorance, and rash and hasty Judging.*

*In the mean time, I'll offer a few things, to the Consideration of those Persons, who being Unbelievers of the Doctrine here asserted, may probably read this Discourse with Prejudices, and perhaps with a Design of quarrelling and contending.*

*I desire them therefore to take notice, in the first Place, that towards the close of Part III. after I have summ'd up all the Evidence, and concluded from thence, the certain Truth of the Fact of our Saviour's Resurrection; I have likewise enumerated all the possible just ways, by which they can proceed to attack the Argument, in order to shew that it does not conclude rightly and truly: by which means, I have both shorten'd their Labour, in giving them a general View of all the Methods of opposing me (that so they may chuse which they think the most effectual) and also shewn how ready and willing I am to bring this Point to an Issue with them, in a rational and sober way, if they think fit so to do.*

*Another thing is; I must desire, they will always remember to distinguish between the Argument it self, and any Mode or Circumstance, of what kind or nature soever it be, which has not a direct and  
neces-*



necessary Dependance upon, or which does not properly and immediately influence the Conclusion. *The second and third Parts of the Book, are but one entire Chain of Reasoning; the Former being only the General Premises, which the Latter concludes from.* If they can find any defect or flaw in the Reasoning, that will make the Conclusion to be unjust and wrong; *then they gain their Point: if not, as I never lov'd disputing upon trifling and frivolous Matters, so they who have Time and Temper for such mean Exercises, shall, for me, engage in them by themselves.*

Again, *I expect likewise, that whatever they have to propose at any Time, be propos'd in an accurate, distinct and methodical way; that they offer no precarious Sermises and Conjectures, no mere Criticisms, no Similies or Illustrations, instead of plain downright Argument: but that they oblige themselves to the business of Reasoning, and not of making flourishes; and that when they have once fix'd upon a Point, they be sure to run it to a head, and not leave it ingloriously, for a Subject of future Animadversions.*

*I won't so much as offer at an Apology, for a Book of this kind; considering the present state of Things in the Christian World. What is talk'd of more, and believ'd less, than the Doctrine here propos'd? We call Jesus Christ Lord and Saviour, we repeat the Articles of the Creed, and bow at his Name, with an hundred more such like Instances of outside Reverence and Devotion; when at the same time there are Multitudes amongst us that are so far from either adoring his Person, or believing his Gospel, that 'tis a question whether the worst Enemies he has in the World, can outdo us in heinous Contempt of both. The Profession of Christianity, is for the most part nothing but mere Pageantry; and People take it upon them*  
out

out of a Compliment to their Country, and to be civil to the Government under which they live.

To call all Reveal'd Religion into question, is now-a-days almost as necessary a Step towards the compleating of a Gentleman; as nice Breeding and Behaviour, or a good Dress. And he that can't (at least) doubt and demur whether the Prophets and Apostles were not mere deluded Enthusiasts, or wicked designing Impostors; makes as ill a Figure in a genteel modish Company, as he who wears a Habit, that has been out of use for two or three Centuries. A Wretch that can scarce hammer out the Sense of an Author of the Lowest Class (perhaps even in his own native Tongue) sets up now-a-days for a Critick upon the Gospel; and every little Tyro, that is just advancing to his first Degree in Mathematicks, thinks he is able to demonstrate all to be a Cheat. But surely, if the Great Masters and Patrons of Deism, who were better furnish'd for all the Purposes of Argument and Enquiry, could never carry their Oppositions to Christianity higher than impotent Slander and Reproach: This inferiour Train of raw unexperienc'd Disciples (who, whatever they have to say, can never pretend, that their Reason and Philosophy are affronted) ought never to attack Religion in insolent and positive Terms; but, tho it were out of mere Complaisance and Regard, to the Examples of their Teachers, should be contented to make their Efforts against Christianity, in a way more worthy of themselves, and let all Pretences to Argument and Reason alone. Scarce ever was any Age so degenerate as ours, wherein People get Interest, Favour, Credit, nay even a bare Livelihood and Subsistence (as some of our exploded Itinerant Deists have done) and all this, upon the pure Merits of Infidelity.

But the Cure of all these Disorders, we must leave to the Care and good Providence of God Almighty.

While

*While the Publication of this Book has been defer'd thro many unforeseen Interruptions and Avocations, I have been surpriz'd sometimes, to find how indiscreetly some Persons, who pretend to stand by the Doctrine here asserted, have talk'd of an Undertaking of this Nature. However, I can certify the Reader, that to the best of my Knowledg, they were only such, to whom I was vastly more indebted for their Dislike, than I should ever have been for their Approbation, had they been any thing busy in telling the World, how much they either approv'd the Design, or valued the Author.*

*There have not been those wanting, who have been so wise, as to think I must rather betray, than vindicate, the Doctrine of the Resurrection; because I do not prove it all along from the New Testament, as a Divine Revelation. And one particularly (who ought to have known better things) could not possibly beat it out of his Head, but the Resurrection was actually to be demonstrated by Lines and Figures; I suppose, because he had met with such unlucky hard Words, as Scholium, Corollary, &c. in the printed Proposals: and did therefore very gravely declare, that 'twas a Shame, an Article of the Christian Faith, and one of such Consequence too, should ever be treated after such a manner. And tho Persons thus rash, are seldom much addicted to Blushing, yet I won't put it to the Trial whether they can or no, by telling them, Who, and What Sort of Persons, have been of a very different Opinion from them, not only as to the Design, but the Performance too.*

*As for my own Part, as I had nothing but the Service and Advantage of a Cause, of molt Important Truth, in view, and which I was fully certain could never suffer, by being set in the clearest Light that could be; so having taken some Pains to do so, I have hopes that this Treatise may be of some Use, to*  
Know-

Knowing, Candid *and* Unprejudic'd Readers of all Sorts; and that they may find some important Points relating to *NATURAL RELIGION*, settled to their Satisfaction in the Appendix, as well as that Great one of *REVEAL'D RELIGION*, in the Body of the Book.







THE  
DEIST's Concern  
To enquire into the  
TRUTH  
OF  
Christ's Resurrection.

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PART I.

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The CONTENTS.

*The Argument, for the Truth of the Christian Religion, drawn from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; propos'd and consider'd.*

*What treatment the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection has met with in the World.*

*The Case between the Christians and Deists, fairly and fully stated.*

*The Consequences of the Doctrine of the Resurrection, as they affect each Party.*

## S E C T. I.



HE that well considers the Force of those Arguments, which are brought to establish the Truth of *Christian Religion*; that sees how they all (tho drawn from different Topicks) conspire in the most perfect manner, to convince the World of the Divine Original of this Faith; would scarce think it possible, that the Reason and Understanding of Mankind should ever oppose it; and therefore conclude, there is something more than pure Infidelity at the bottom, and that they are not mere Scruples of the Mind, which create so long and violent Contention.

If he thinks on the Excellency of the Precepts of the *Christian Religion*, he finds them of the fittest Nature possible, to persuade him to receive it as the Contrivance of Heaven: They are all so worthy of God, so beneficial and improving to Human Nature, and so conducive to the Welfare and Happiness of Society.

When he considers the strange and speedy Propagation of this Faith through the World, with its triumph over the Wit and Policy, the Force and Malice of its formidable Enemies; and all this accomplish'd by such Methods, as the Reason of Mankind would have pronounc'd the most foolish and absurd: He sees here the over-ruling Hand of God, which alone could give it such astonishing Successes; by those very Ways and Means, from which its utter Confusion was to be expected.

The

The exact Accomplishment of exprefs and unquestionable Prophecies, concerning the most remarkable Events of the World; is a solemn Appeal to all reasonable Nature, whether that Revelation be not truly Divine, which contains such plain and wonderful Predictions.

Lastly, The Miracles wrought by *Christ Jesus* and his *Apostles*, in Confirmation of this Faith and Doctrine, are such Proofs of the near Concern which Heaven had therein; that he who considers them, and at the same time calls *Christianity* an Imposture, must either take pains to avoid knowing the Finger of God, when he sees it, or else do infinitely worse, by ascribing the manifest Effects thereof to mean Artifice, or Diabolical Power.

From these Topicks, the Truth of *Christianity* has been so substantially argu'd, and so clearly prov'd; that by all the Rules of right Reason in use amongst Mankind, 'tis render'd plainly absurd and irrational to reject it. One need not wish to see an Adversary reduc'd to worse Extremities, than one of these Arguments well-manag'd and press'd home, would reduce him to; provided he were kept from Excursions, and oblig'd to return no Answers but what were directly to the Purpose.

## S E C T. II.

**H**OWever, waving all these, as being more commonly and largely handled already, I shall at present make choice of another Argument, to establish the Divine Authority of the *Christian Religion*, (one which will, with some particular

## 4      *The Necessity of enquiring*      Part I.

Advantages, answer the Design I propose to myself in making use of it) and that is, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Author of this Religion in the World.*

This is the great *Doctrine of Christianity*, which serves as a Foundation to all the rest; and from which alone, indeed, the Truth of all the rest may be infer'd.

If this Article be taken from a *Christian*, he will find no difficulty in parting with any other you shall ask of him: Of so great Importance is it to his present Comfort and Satisfaction, and to his future Happiness, both in Soul and Body.

I am very sensible how ridiculous a Topick this is, in the Opinions of those Gentlemen (the *Deists*) with whom I am now concern'd. Tho few Articles of the *Christian Faith* meet with any such Treatment from them, as may be call'd civil; yet *This* is treated with a particular Severity: And whatever 'scapes them, this is sure to have no Quarter, in their *free Discourses and Conversations* about Religion. My Business here being to argue with them, and not to make Reflections on their Conduct; I shall content myself with only observing two Things.

*First*, That besides the possible Danger of taking such Liberties with a Doctrine of such grand Consequence to them, as well as to us; besides the Indiscretion and Ill-breeding of exposing, in Terms so very malignant and invidious (as they do sometimes) That which the Country they live in, owns as a *Fundamental Article of its Faith*, and which many Men, of no less Wisdom and Sagacity than these Gentlemen, do lay the whole Stress of their *Salva-*

*tion upon:* Besides all this (I say) there is a Point of Honour to be consider'd, which one would think, should bear some sway, and prevail with them to take those Measures, which Prudence, and a Sense of Decency cannot. For these Gentlemen would do well to remember, that as free as they are of their *Satyr* and *Invectives*, they have hitherto been extremely sparing of their Arguments. It is with so much caution that they conceal, and keep all kinds of reasoning to themselves, that nothing short of *Christian Charity* (which always thinks the best) can possibly be genteel and good-natur'd enough, to pay them the Compliment of believing, they have Arguments as well as Raillery, to assault *Christianity* withal. Now, I say, 'tis ungenerous to play upon a Subject with Wit (as some People very guiltily call it) when it demands a fair Trial by Reason and Argument. It looks but poorly for Men to stand at a distance, pelting Religion with little *Jests* and *Reflections*; when they have liberty to come up as close as they please, and end the Dispute in a more honourable way.

For where Men discover Spleen and hearty Concern in opposing a Cause, those that stand by, will naturally conclude (since they see them in earnest) that they exert their best Strength, and do as much Mischief as they can.

But then another Consideration, which I think very much lessens the Honour of this way of proceeding, is, That all the Wit that serves to expose Religion, is so scandalously cheap, and costs a Man so very little. I don't say, but it may possibly cost the Authors of it dearer hereafter; but what I intend is, that it is not a very chargeable thing at present, since a little of



6 *The Necessity of enquiring* Part I.

it, with such good and frugal Management as they commonly bestow on it, will go a great way.

For let these Gentlemen but consider, That as Mens vicious Lives do too commonly make it their Interest and Concern, that the *Christian Religion* should be a Cheat; so they are extremely ready and willing to believe it is really so: And when once a Subject is nicely suted to Peoples Humours and Inclinations, there needs not abundance of Wit to make a Discourse of it very palatable, and bring the Speaker off with Reputation and Applause. The Mirth and Pleasure of the unthinking Part of Mankind (which is by far the greatest Part) is almost as blind and mechanical, as the very Motion of a Piece of Clockwork. They are stir'd and *delighted*; tho they scarce know *with* what, or *for* what Cause, or *to* what End and Purpose. But if you strike them, they move as other Matter does; and that too, as long as the Impulse lasts. Especially if the String of Religion be touch'd something roughly, by the hand of an Enemy; wicked Nature, or Prejudice (like a *Chord in Unisone*) presently dances to the Motion, and returns the same Sound. Men, whose Understandings are otherwise dull enough, can feel, by a sort of sympathetick Pleasure, when *Christianity* is insulted and abus'd; and perceive a rude Jest pass'd upon the Preachers of the Gospel, tho they don't know *Satyr* from *Complement*, upon another occasion. And so great is the Power of Prejudice and Aversion, even in some who are masters of more Reason and Sagacity than the common Sort, that *manifest Sophistry* frequently goes down with them for *Demonstration*; and the most *insipid Things* (when level'd  
at

at Religion) pass for *Beauties and delicate Turns of Thought*.

Now these are but poor Triumphs; because 'tis not to the Reason and Understanding of Mankind, but to their Passions and Appetites (which are pre-ingag'd against Religion) that all this Talk is address'd. Reason is a nice and scrupulous Thing, and will be pleas'd with nothing but what is solid and just; but Passion and Prejudice swallow every thing that is offer'd, and you can't avoid gratifying them, provided you consult their Bent and Tendency, and do but fall in with them in the Way that they go. But then, as there is some Satisfaction and Glory, in pleasing the *noble rational part* of a Man; so methinks to sooth and flatter the *brutal Part*, should be scorn'd and despis'd. A Man that considers things well, would much sooner take it as a heinous Affront, to be charg'd with saying such fine things as these are; than think it a Credit to him, for other People to say, that he was the Author of them. However, as the Case stands, 'tis no great wonder that so many who set up against *Christianity*, get the Reputation of being Wits. The Price of the Character is not so dear, but we may suppose multitudes able enough to lay it down. Yet it would mortify a thoughtful Man to consider, that he should be beholden to the Vices and Follies of Mankind for a Reputation, and not to Judgment and sober Sense: And that better Judges would very much question his Understanding, upon the score of those very things which procure him the Name of a Wit, amongst People who either can't contradict him, or are so devoted to him by a blind implicit Faith, that they could vouch for the Truth

of what he says, even before he speaks it.

Secondly, It may be farther observ'd, *That this way of assaulting Christianity, is not at all a new thing.* The *modern Deists* may perhaps have improv'd it considerably; however, their Predecessors, in the more early Ages of *Christianity*, manag'd the Controversy much after the same manner. They banter'd the Doctrine of the *Resurrection*, pursu'd it with \* Scoffs and Laughter, instead of fair Reasonings against the Credibility of it. They did not think it enough to deny it themselves, but they endeavour'd to render it as infamous to all the World as they could: And therefore loaded it with the opprobrious Names of † *Absurd, Abominable, and Impossible*: As if a Torrent of hard Words and Reproaches, without any Arguments, had been sufficient to bear down all the Credit of the Doctrine; and persuade those who had believ'd it, to treat it with the same Contempt, that the profess'd Enemies of it did.

I am sensible, that in the last mention'd Passage out of *Origen*, the Criminator *Celsus* brings in some *Christians*, as aspersing the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* in these vile Terms; and makes them talk after this manner, of the grand fundamental Article of their own Religion. But this being so far from all Probability, and only asserted in general Terms, without particular Proof; and besides, the very Notion of a *Resurrection* being (in the same Place) so abominably misrepresented and perverted into quite another Sense, than the *Christians* ever took it in:

\* *Μυστήριον γελάμενον ἢ ἀπιστον.* Orig.

† *Ἀπόπυστον ἀμα καὶ ἀδύνατον.* Cels. apud Orig. Lib. 5. Pag. (mihi) 240.



'Tis plain, that this was *Celsus's* own Calumny; or at least 'twas what other Enemies (as inveterate, and as little conversant in what they oppose, as he was) had vented, to render the Doctrine contemptible amongst Mankind.

Nor were they more sparing of their Invective against that of the *Resurrection* of *Jesus Christ* in particular. And therefore they represented the whole Scene, as mere *Illusion* and *Dream*; and those who believ'd it, as Persons possess'd with a phantastical Fury, or under the Power of some magical Incantation.

The Appearances of *Christ* after his *Resurrection*, they compar'd to those of \* *Spectres* and *Apparitions*, which, how much soever believ'd by the Vulgar, were notwithstanding only the Diversion of those, who had the Character of being wise and sensible Men. And so they expos'd the Disciples, who affirm'd they had seen and convers'd with *Jesus Christ*; if not as wilful Lyars and Impostors, yet as weak crazy People, that made a noise of strange Things, which had no existence but in their own Imaginations.

And these are some of the same Things, which our *modern Deists* say now. But Reproaches and precarious Assertions, are (as I said before) of all the Arguments in the World, the least expensive, both to those who oppose, and those who defend a Cause.

Now the *Use* which (I think) we may justly make of so early an Opposition to *Christianity*, carried on after this manner; is very conside-

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\* Κοινοποιεῖν πρὸς ἕτερα φαντάσματα, καὶ ἄλλας φαντάσεις, τὰ καὶ τὸ Ἰησοῦν, καὶ τοὺς ἰδόντας αὐτὸν, μὴ δὲ τινὲ ἀνάστασιν. Pag. 98. Ibid.

siderable, and ought not to be pass'd by without notice. For did the Enemies content themselves with bare scolding and railing, *at that Time of the Day*? Did they go this way to work, when the Religion was so *young*, when the main Matter of Fact was *new and fresh in the World*, when it was so easy to trace Things, and run them up to a Head, by careful and accurate Enquiries? Was this all they thought fit to do so near the *very Time*, and (as I may say) upon the *very Spot*, when all Mankind were full of the Discourse, and the Thing lay open to every Body's Examination; when the learned *Greek* and the invidious *Jew*, might both have had their fill of searching, and the World would have thank'd them for the Discovery of the Imposture? What (I pray) could this be the Effect of, *but only their having nothing else to say*? For would they have spar'd *Christianity*, had it lain at their Mercy? Did they shew such a Fondness for it by all their unwearied Malice and Calumny, that they would have forbore telling *dangerous Truth*, out of a concern for its Reputation? One substantial Argument that should fairly have shewn, that our Saviour's Miracles and Resurrection were nothing but mere Juggle, and the Apostles a Company of Impostors, would have done the Business. Nay, an Argument that should (upon solid and rational Grounds) but have made out a *just Suspicion* to Mankind, that they were Cheats; would have done it to incomparably more Advantage, than all the false *Philosophy*, the bad *Logick*, and the worse *Rhetorick*, that *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, *Julian*, or any of that Tribe employ'd against *Christianity*, ever did, or could possibly do. And therefore, I say, 'tis one good Confirmation of the  
Faith

Faith of a *Christian*, That the worst Enemies, in those Times when they should and might have said most, said only that which made it plain to all the World, that they had nothing to the purpose to say.

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## S E C T. III.

HAVING premis'd these things, I shall now proceed to observe; That this Argument drawn from the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, as 'tis concise, and brings the whole Controversy into a very small Compass; so it is very positive and decratory; and will so fully determine it, that there will be no room left for any farther Dispute. To evince this, and at the same time to persuade each of the contending Parties to examine, with the utmost Care, a Doctrine which so nearly concerns them; I shall here enumerate those Consequences, which will affect either the *Christians* or the *Deists*, according as we suppose the *Resurrection of Christ* to be either true or false. I am willing to put it both ways, that I may proceed in every step of this great Enquiry, in so fair and impartial a Manner, that the Gentlemen of the contrary Opinion may have no just Reason to object any thing of unequal Proceeding, or a voluntary sly Concealment of what may seem to make for the Disadvantage of the *Christian Cause*. I declare, that I know of no danger *Christianity* is in, by any Freedom which can be us'd, consistent with Truth and Justice: If I did, I would abandon the Profession of it. For no Religion which is Divine, can ever possibly need Falshood and Deceit to support it.

False

false Colours, and pious Frauds, may possibly be very useful or needful in the Management of some Religions, that are, or have been in the World; which, without such Helps, would discover themselves too far, to attract the Zeal and Devotion of Mankind any longer. The Poet tells us, that such Services as these were \* acceptable to his *Jupiter*; and there would be a Time, when the Doers of them would be † rewarded.

But *Christianity* neither needs or encourages any such Methods, nor would the Author of it think himself serv'd by them. As his Religion is all plain and sincere, so it needs nothing but Truth to defend it. I shall therefore not scruple at any time to make such Concessions, be they what they will, as Justice, Truth, and right Reason require should be made.

## S E C T. IV.

**I**F the Resurrection of Jesus Christ be a Truth:  
Then it follows,

First, *With respect to the Christians*;

(1.) That the great Dispute concerning the Divine Authority of the *Christian Religion*, must be decided entirely in favour of them. For if *Christ* rose from the Dead, then he was a Person sent from *God*, to do that Work in the World, which he pretended he came about: Because the Majesty of Heaven would never have

\* Ἀπλῆς διχαίας ἐκ ἀποστατεῖ ΘΕΟ'Σ.

† Ψευδῶν δὲ κατεχὲν ἔσθ' ὅποι τιμῇ ΘΕΟ'Σ. Æschyl.  
Vid. Opuscul. Mytholog. D. Gale. Pag. 720.



given an Impostor so glorious Credentials, as a *Resurrection from the Dead*; a Work which nothing but *Omniporency* could possibly accomplish. For this would have been to have set his *own Seal* to the Delusion, and have made it pass for credible amongst Mankind, by the *Authority of Heaven*.

If *Jesus Christ* had a *Divine Mission*, then all his *Doctrine is true*, and his *Laws Obligatory to Mankind*, where they are promulg'd and known. For a *Minister from Heaven*, who must needs be a Person of *perfect Sincerity and Truth*, could not possibly teach or impose any thing on Mankind, but *what should be exactly agreeable to the Mind and Will of Him* that sent him.

(2.) *All the Promises of the Gospel*, relating to the Enjoyments and Blessings of a future Life, *will certainly be fulfill'd to them*. For the sure and certain Performance of those Promises, will be infer'd from the *Sincerity and Veracity* of Him who made them: And he being (by the *Hypothesis*, or what follows from it) a *Person sent from God*; 'tis plain, that whatever he has said, may be *depended upon and trusted to*, as certain to come to pass.

(3.) From whence it follows, that the *Christians* are not only *perfectly secure*, in submitting to the Laws and Institutions of *Jesus Christ*; but they are also the *wisest Men in the World* in so doing. Because, whatever Inconveniencies an honourable and faithful Discharge of their Duty may be attended with at present; they are sure of an abundant Recompence in a *future State*, where despis'd or oppress'd *Virtue and Piety* will be crown'd with all those Rewards, which are now promis'd in the Gospel. In a word, the *Resurrection of Christ* is a compleat  
Secu-

Security to all *good Christians*, for the enjoyment of such Privileges as are by far too great for all our Conceptions in this World, and therefore much more beyond *Description*.

Secondly, *With respect to the Deists*.

(1.) They do not only *lose their Argument and their Cause*, but are in danger also of losing *Eternal Happiness in the next World*. Because, while they persist in their Infidelity, they stand liable to all the Threatnings which the Gospel denounces against the finally impenitent Despisers of it; and which must (upon this *Hypothesis*) as certainly be executed, as the Promises be fulfill'd. And this they ought to take notice of, that Jesus Christ has not been more liberal in his Promises of *inconceivable Happiness and Bliss*, to all who sincerely love and obey him; than he has been severe and positive in his threatnings of *extreme Misery*, to those who slight his Authority, and the Method of Salvation he has reveal'd.

I do not determine any thing here concerning the Gospel, whether it be *Divine Truth, or mere Imposture*: But this, I say, that since the Threatnings of it are denounc'd in so dreadful and positive a manner as they are, Men ought to take care that they do not venture too far, and should therefore think with themselves, that the Matter we are enquiring into, deserves the most serious Thoughts and Reflections they can possibly bestow upon it.

(2.) Again, if the *Resurrection of Christ* be certain, then in order to free themselves from all this Danger, these Gentlemen will be oblig'd to receive the Doctrines of the Gospel as *Divine Truths*, and submit to the Laws and Injunctions of it; and therefore should set themselves with  
all

all the Zeal and Application they can, to throw off all those Prejudices and Aversions, which have hitherto hinder'd them from so doing.

They must leave off all their Quibbling and Disputing, and take whatever they find plainly reveal'd in the Gospel; remembring, *That tho infinite Wisdom and Goodness can never possibly oblige them to believe any thing that is really absurd and contradictory, or do any thing which is unreasonable; yet they may be oblig'd to believe and practise many things, which unconquer'd Prejudice may tell them are absurd and unreasonable, and which they may think to be so, by using themselves to judg of the Ways of God too much by human Rules and Measures.*

These Inferences, I hope, will be allow'd to be just and good, upon the *Hypothesis*, that *the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a certain Truth.*

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## S E C T. V.

NOW from hence follows this *Corollary*: That since the Danger these Gentlemen are in (upon the *Hypothesis of the Truth of 'Christ's Resurrection*) is so very great; they must either have very clear and convincing Proofs *to themselves*, that that Doctrin is neither true, nor even *probable and likely* to be true; or else the Peace which they enjoy under an uncertainty about that matter, is not the *Peace of wise Men*. The Reason is, because otherwise their Ease and Quiet have no Foundation that is truly rational, to support them.

The Peace which wise Men enjoy, is a quiet and compos'd Temper of Mind, resulting from  
mature

mature Thought, and a serious Consideration of Circumstances. When all accounts being carefully ballanc'd, and things duly compar'd on every side, a Man finds nothing that sticks, sufficient to raise a just Scruple, or cause any degree of Pain or Remorse; this is a rational Repose: And whatever Quiet proceeds not from this Cause, deserves no better Name than that of *Mechanical*; as owing its rise either to Ignorance, or Contempt of Danger, or to some Arts and Management of the Body, used to divert the Mind from the Sense of it. But how wretched a Shift is this! Men must be very hard put to it indeed, when things are brought to that pass, that their Ease and Quiet must be the mere Effect of a voluntary Incapacity to judg of the Reasons they have to be uneasy. Methinks a Man who manages himself after this manner, is in no better a Case, than he whom the Power of Wine has thrown into a sound sleep on the Top of a Precipice; who is secure for no other reason, but that he has lost his Senses. 'Tis not difficult for Men, by tampering with the *Machine*, to induce a fatal *Stupor* or *Listlessness* upon their Minds, and so bring themselves into a *pleasing Insensibility* of all things that tend to frighten or disturb them, tho they are the most necessary in the World to be thought of: So a guilty Malefactor, by the Charms of an *Opiate*, forgets the Horrors of an *Execution-Day*, and enjoys all the Pleasures of a Fool's Paradise, till Death comes to awaken him.

But who reckons such a one any other than desperate, in all the false Pleasure he enjoys? Or who thinks it a rational Repose, for a Man in any Circumstance whatsoever, to banish Thought and Fear, and give himself up to Mirth and  
Diver-



Diversion, when his Case is doubtful, and there is but a Chance for his 'scaping some fearful Calamity, which may surprize him the next Hour?

And I cannot see, but that the Gentlemen, who reject the *Christian Revelation*, are very liable to be charg'd with the same sort of Folly (tho in a Case of infinitely greater Danger, than any that can happen in the present World) unless they are able to prove, *to the entire Satisfaction of their own Minds*, That there is no Truth in this *History of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*: For if it be true, they know what follows, if they persist in their Infidelity to the last. And if they have Reasons to prove it not true, and such as will bear Examination; 'tis matter of some wonder they were never fairly propos'd, and made out: Because this might have been done with much less offence to the World, and disparagement to themselves, than what those bad Methods they have made use of, instead of Argument, have been the just Occasions of. If they have affronted the Religion of their Country, with *Impunity*; they might have reason'd soberly (like Men desirous of Truth, and willing to be rightly inform'd) with as little danger. Since therefore the Subject is of so much Importance; since there have been so many Occasions and Opportunities for arguing in the best manner upon it; since modest and fair Reasonings would have been less obnoxious to Censure, and far more advantageous, with respect to the Conviction of others, than Banter and Raillery can ever be suppos'd to be: 'tis rational for any Man to conclude, *That they have no such Reasons, by which they can, with an entire Satisfaction, as-*

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sure

*sure themselves, that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not true. And this Conclusion, which now is highly rational, I hope to make undoubtedly certain, by those Reasons which I shall hereafter propose, in order to shew, that the Doctrine of the Resurrection, is actually true.*

But farther, I say, that if this *Doctrine* be but ever so little probable, these Gentlemen cannot be allow'd a rational Ease and Repose in that Case neither. For so far forth as this is probable, it is also probable, *That they are obnoxious to all the Punishments threatned to Unbelievers in the Gospel.*

And is a bare probability of such Danger to be born with any ease, by Men who are truly awake? Suppose a Man so far expos'd, that not only his Liberty and Fortune, but his very Life depended upon his Concealment: Do you think that such a Person would lie free from Pain, in a Place where it should be said to him, *Here you may be secure, but yet 'tis probable you may be taken?* Would not this wretched likelihood of a Discovery, produce anxious Thoughts in the Breasts of any of these Gentlemen themselves, if this were their own Case? Would it not excite Fears and Cares, and passionate Desires after a better and safer Retreat? Nothing could be so agreeable to a Person in such a Circumstance, as a *Certainty of escaping.* And is Uncertainty a tolerable thing, when *Everlasting Life and Felicity lie at stake?* Let but these Gentlemen intermit their Mirth and gay Thoughts for a few Moments, while they consider how hard a Task they will have to prove, *That it is not at all probable, that the History of Christ's Resurrection is true.* The  
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Difficulty is such, that I dare venture to engage, whoever promises to go through with it, is not as good as his Word ; and besides, runs into some manifest *Paralogism*, which his own common Notions and Opinions, in other matters, shall fairly convict him of.

I shall not prevent my self, by alledging any thing here, to evince the Probability of this *Doctrine*, which may afterwards be made use of (to much better purpose) to infer the certain Truth of it. 'Tis sufficient to have put these Gentlemen in mind of the Work incumbent on them ; to free themselves from the Imputation, of passing their Days here in the World in a blind mechanical Tranquillity. If they think that the same Argument I have us'd against *them*, may be as fairly turn'd against the *Christians*, and should therefore reason after this manner, *That if the Resurrection of Christ should not be true, the Christians would be as much in Danger, as They should be if it were true ; and consequently, can no more enjoy the Peace of wise Men, whilst under an uncertainty about it, than they can be suppos'd to do in the other Case :*

*I answer ;* First, We shall see by the Sequel of this Discourse, whether or no the *Christians* have such Proofs for the Truth of this *Doctrine*, as are sufficient to make it strictly just and rational for *them* to believe it. For if they have, then they may in the mean time enjoy the *Peace of wise Men*.

*Secondly*, I shall by and by consider, in a very particular manner, that Danger which these Gentlemen object to us, and bid us beware of, in case we are deceiv'd in the matter of *Christ's Resurrection*. And if it be so, that they are fully determin'd to draw no positive Conclu-

sions, but where they have plain and evident Principles to infer them from; I am in some hopes to present them with an Occasion of putting so good a Resolution in practice, by despising this Objection for the time to come; as having no Foundations but what are perfectly arbitrary and precarious; and (to say all at once) being nothing but mere *Words* and *Sound*, without any *Force* or *Weight*.

*We have hitherto consider'd the Consequences of the suppos'd Truth or Probability of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

I shall now put the *Case the other way*, and see what will follow, as fairly and truly, upon that *Supposition also*.

## S E C T. VI.

**I**F the Resurrection of Jesus Christ be not a Truth: Then it follows,

*First*, That the whole Cause of Christianity is to be given up; as that which neither *deserves*, nor is capable of any farther Defence.

For if that *Doctrine* (which is the Foundation on which all depends) be *false* and *delusory*, all the rest can be but Delusion; and so may be parted with, without any Scruple or Difficulty at all. And therefore,

*Secondly*, As the *Deists* have nothing to fear from the Threatnings, so neither have the *Christians* any thing to hope from the Promises of the Gospel: Because neither Promises nor Threatnings can (in this Case) signify any thing; the whole Contexture being (by the *Hypothesis*) a mere Imposture.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly, Upon the present Hypothesis, it must be granted likewise, That those Persons who reject the Christian Revelation, are much wiser and happier, in many respects, than those who embrace it.*

To speak of things according to the Rules of strict and impartial Reason; Wisdom and Happiness are not to be measur'd by *present Circumstances and Appearances*, but by the *last Issues or Results* of Things.

That is best, which ends best: He is the most prudent and happy Person, that provides the most durable Felicity for himself.

Now if the *Resurrection of Christ* were certainly true, and the Gospel (consequently) a *Divine Revelation*, whose Promises are all sure to be fulfill'd; then in whatever Circumstances the *Christians* are suppos'd to be in the present World, they would yet be the Wisest and Happiest of all Men. The Happiest, because they would be in the way of receiving all those glorious Rewards, which sincere Faith and Obedience are entitl'd to in a future State: And the Wisest, because it would be an infinitely more just and rational Course, to endure some present Inconveniences, and be oblig'd to the most laborious Duties, upon such a Prospect hereafter; than to hazard the Loss of a never-ending Felicity, for the sake of a short-liv'd Pleasure, or some little Freedom here in the World.

But if the *Doctrine* of the *Resurrection of Christ*, and the *Religion* founded thereon, be nothing but mere Cheat and Imposture; and by consequence there be no Hopes nor Prospect of that transcendent Bliss in the next World, which the *Christians* make use of, to encourage themselves to a chearful Submission to all the Laws



of the *Dispensation* they are under : Then, I think, it is evident, that (in general) they have a much harder Fate of it, than the Gentlemen on the other side ; who by seeing through the Imposture, and wisely avoiding being caught by it, do by that means secure their Repose, and make themselves perfectly easy, during the short Period of Human Life.

For the Proof of this, let us consider ;

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## S E C T. VII.

First, **T**HE *Miseries and Sufferings of all sorts, attending the Profession of Christianity in the World.*

Our Saviour *Jesus Christ* (who deluded no Man by little Artifices into the Profession of his *Religion*) fairly told his Disciples at first, what they were to expect upon that account. He let them know in very plain and express Terms, that a sincere and stedfast Adherence to him, would cost them very dear, by drawing the Hatred and Malice of the whole World upon them. This we find in several places up and down in the *Gospels*. And the Apostles afterwards continu'd to inculcate the same thing in all their Sermons and Writings ; declaring, there was no worldly Gain or Reputation to be expected from the Profession and Practice of *Christianity* ; but so far the contrary, *That all those who would live Godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer Persecution.* And we find accordingly, that these Predictions have been abundantly fulfill'd ; tho' the fulfilling of them has been as terrible, as it has been punctual and exact. Whatever could

could be accomplish'd by a Confederacy of such Passions, which (when they prevail) spread Confusion and Plagues amongst Mankind, and make the Earth a Picture of Hell; has been done against the Disciples of *Christ*. No sooner was *Christianity* planted, but the jealous World took the Alarm; storm'd at the Encroachment, and set to the rooting of it out. All sorts of Men put their Hands to the Work, and made it their Business to render this Profession infamous and wretched to the last Degree. The Men of *Power and Grandeur* oppos'd it with open *Force and Violence*. The Men of *Wit and Learning* assaulted it in their own Way: The *Philosophers*, by crafty and subtle Disputations: The *Orators*, by Harangues full of malicious Eloquence: The wise *Politicians* and *States-men*, by cruel and severe Decrees. So that what by one way and the other, what between the Persecutions of the *Sword* and the *Tongue*; it has been the most deplorable Case in the World for a Man to be a *Christian*. Indeed the *latter* of these two Persecutions, tho' very grievous and troublesome in it self, was yet never capable of producing such frightful Effects as the *former*. *Sarcasm and Reproach* are very great Trials of Mens Patience and Resolution; but not near so great as *Tortures and Executions*. And here I may safely say, that Human Invention has scarce ever been so *luxuriant* in any one Instance, as in contriving ways to shed *Christian Blood*. Nor would any Art be sufficient to paint out Images of so much Horror, in Colours that should bear any tolerable Proportion to the Life. 'Tis enough, and instead of all Descriptions, to say, *they suffer'd*. But Oh! With what Charms of Meekness and good

Temper, with what admirable Patience and Composedness of Mind? They softned the Rage of their most savage Persecutors by Prayers and Forgiveness: They rejoic'd in *Him for whose Name* they endur'd all, and concluded all their Triumphs in this World, with triumphing over Death it self.

All these things are so well known to be true, that there is no need of Authorities to support what I say. A good part of the History of 17 Centuries, is sufficient proof for it, and at hand for every one to consult.

However, it may not be amiss (for the sake of those, whose Faith goes no farther than a *Roman* or *Greek* Writer) to mention \* one, who has spoke freely enough on this Subject, and I am sure can never be suspected of any thing of Partiality in favour of the *Christians*. 'Tis true, this Author (who, tho an excellent *Historian*, plainly enough shews himself to have been a Man of *Spleen and Passion*) represents the *Christians* as a wicked and flagitious sort of People. But the Account he has given (in another † part of his Writings) concerning the *Jews*, and their Journey out of *Egypt*, under the Conduct of *Moses*; is, I think, a sufficient proof, that his Word may well be question'd, as to what he here reports of the *Christians*.

Now this being the true State of their Case, one may easily conclude, that no Men endow-

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\* *Ergo abolendo Rumori, NERO subdidit reos, & quæ sitissimis penis affecit, quos per flagitia invisos Vulgus CHRISTIANOS appellabat.—Et percuntibus addita Ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contecti, laniatu Canum interirent, aut Crucibus affixi, aut flammandi: atque ubi defecisset dies, in usum Nocturni Luminis urerentur.* Tacit. Annal. Lib. 15.

† Tacit. Histor. Lib. 5.

ed with *common Sense and Prudence*, or those Principles of *Self-love and Preservation* which Nature has put into all other Creatures, would ever render themselves obnoxious to such Miseries as they have done, were it not upon the Prospect of a future Recompence.

But where is this Reward, if the Doctrine of *Christ's Resurrection* be not true? 'Tis this Doctrine which proves the Truth of the Gospel, and secures the Performance of the Promises made therein. So that if *this* be a Delusion, all is wrong; and the splendid Descriptions of a future Happiness given there, to encourage Mankind to Patience and Constancy in Sufferings, are but Jest and Cheat, or mere enthusiastical Amusement. The Heaven of the *Christians*, is every whit as imaginary, as that of the *Poets*; and on both sides no more than *conceited Elysian Shades and Groves*, if we are out in this Article of our *Christian Faith*. How sad a disappointment then must those Persons meet with, who have undergone such Calamities in this World, for the sake of an Imposture; and been led by the hopes of mere fancy'd Bliss, to make themselves the most wretched of all Men?

To expect Salvation from one who is not a Saviour, and depend upon Rewards that shall never be bestow'd! To pass the few Moments of Life in Pain and Sorrow, rejoicing in hope of a bright Scene of Glory, to make up for all in the next World; and then to find all vanish, and their best Expectations frustrated for ever! Who are deplorably unhappy, if these Persons are not? And with what reason did St. *Paul* (a Writer whom the *Christians* believe to be *divinely Inspir'd*) conclude, *That if in this Life only they have Hope in Christ, they are of all Men the most miserable?*

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'Tis true, the Scène is chang'd, and *Christianity* is not now a-days that persecuted thing it formerly was, being under the Protection and Encouragement of the Secular Powers. But what then? 'Tis the same Religion still, and there's the same Enmity in the World against it; and this Enmity would produce the very same Effects, if *He who stills the raging Sea, and bridles the Fury and Madness of the People,* did not set Bounds to it, by his wise all-governing Providence. Farther, Those who believe the Gospel, are bound (by a general Law) to expect and prepare for Sufferings: Nor is any Man (whatever he pretends) a real Disciple of *Christ Jesus*, till he has in some measure learnt that great Lesson, of *denying himself, taking up his Cross and following him*, through what rugged or dangerous Way soever he shall be led.

And therefore, if we take all this into the Account, I cannot see but the Argument may very well be press'd in the general; tho the *Christians* sometimes live in Sunshine, and enjoy the Smiles of the World.

## S E C T. VIII.

Secondly, **A**S the *Christians*, by owning the Divine Authority of the Gospel, are thus expos'd, so they are bound also to perform all the Duties, and submit to all the Discipline, which the Gospel enjoins: Whereas the *Deists* (by their very Principles) escape all this Toil and Labour, and keep themselves free from any sort of Impositions, that would clog and confine them in the present World.

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As much Wisdom and true Reason as there is in the *Christian Institution*, which would effectually recommend it to all that should examine it with *unprejudic'd* Judgment and Care; yet 'tis no wonder that it appears so hard and severe to the greatest part of the World, who look superficially into it, and never consider whither its grand Design and Tendency is.

The Laws of *Christ Jesus* command a strict Government of our Thoughts and Passions, as well as of our outward Actions and Behaviour. Those secret Motions of our Souls, which are beyond the Cognizance of any earthly Tribunal, are curiously inspected, and impartially censur'd here. To contrive Sin, is Sin, in the Sense of the Gospel, as well as to execute it. Covetous Desires are Injustice; and revengeful Thoughts, a Degree of Murder, Calumny and Reproach; Backbiting and Slander are rank'd amongst the blackest Works of the Flesh. To wound the good Name of our Neighbour, is as great an Injury, as by Force or Fraud to deprive him of his Right. To deny our Selves, and that in very difficult instances, is a fundamental Duty, without the Practice of which, no Man can be admitted into the Number of *Christ's Followers*. And what a Task is it, to silence clamorous Passions, and make Flesh and Blood truly quiet after Injuries and Affronts? How hard is it to baulk the Appetite of Revenge, when 'tis in our Power to satisfy it; to do Good for Evil; and with relenting Bowels of Charity, embrace the Object which Nature shuns and starts at? But more than this, *Christianity* requires a great and generous Temper of Soul, which is directly contrary to all the Principles of that base and stingy Self-love, which

we are so prone to indulge. By the Gospel-Laws, our Thoughts and Cares are not to be centred solely in our Selves; but a Share of both to be allow'd to our Neighbour, whom we are oblig'd to *love as our Selves*; and therefore to rejoice in his Good, to consult and promote his Interest; and help either to deliver him from his Burdens, or put our own Shoulders to the bearing of them.

Nor is it less to live above the present World, as the Gospel obliges us, and to be equally unshaken by the Terrors and Allurements of it: To stand intrepid in the midst of Dangers, and despise the loss of all things, even the most near and dear to us; when Fidelity to our Lord, and a good Conscience, can't be preserv'd together with the Enjoyment of them. On the other hand, to guard our Affections from the pernicious Influences of those enticing Objects that surround us, and pass through all the Scenes of worldiy Pomp and Pleasure here presented to our View, with the Unconcernedness of Strangers and Pilgrims, whose Desires are towards another Country. In short, how sublime a thing is it, to live by Faith, and not by Sense? To depend upon a Promise of things unseen, under a thousand Discouragements and Temptations to Infidelity? To submit our Understandings with a becoming Humility, to Mysteries that are intirely above them; our Wills to the Divine Pleasure and Disposal; and make it our Delight to do, and to be in all Cases, just what infinite Wisdom shall think fit to determine.

And tho there's no Man that comes up to so strict an Observance of these Evangelical Precepts, as he ought to do; yet every Man is oblig'd

oblig'd (under the severest Penalties) to do his utmost; and with an undissembled Zeal and Resolution, to press towards Perfection, as far as the unavoidable Infirmities of Human Nature will permit. Not that Men are hereby oblig'd to endeavour to divest themselves of the Passions and Inclinations of Human Nature; or to run into a sullen Contempt of the useful and innocent Enjoyments of Life; affecting such Severities, as would render Religion frightful to Mankind: But to make all their Pleasures, for Kind and Degree, such as the Rules of the Gospel allow of; to chuse Objects with religious Judgment and Prudence, and give no more loose to the Passions when employ'd about them, *than what is truly consistent with the great End of all earthly Comforts; which is only to refresh us, while we are in pursuit of better.*

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## S E C T. IX.

**B**UT now as all these sublime abstracted Duties are plainly calculated for, and adapted to, the great End of preparing us for a future Happiness, such as the Gospel reveals; so if the Gospel be an Imposture, and all the Rewards it promises come to nothing, then these Duties themselves (losing their main End and Use) become burdensom Impositions on Mankind.

'Tis true indeed, the *Christian Religion* (be it a Truth or a Fiction) is so contriv'd, as to be in all respects admirably serviceable to the Ends and Purposes of a temporal Felicity. For those Principles of generous Love and Charity,  
that

that superiour Temper of Mind, that devout and awful Regard to God, and a future Life, which it tends to inspire Mankind withal; these are contrary, in the highest degree, to all those mean and base Affections, which are the sole Disturbers of the Peace and good Order of the World. If Pride and Envy, if Covetousness and Ambition, if Malice and Revenge, if Falshood and Deceit; if such Passions as these are the true Causes of all those Calamities and Misfortunes which Men make such heavy Complaints of: then the Gospel, which strikes so directly at all these, even in Mens Hearts and Tempers, as well as Conversation and outward Behaviour, does undoubtedly lay the surest Foundations possible for a quiet and comfortable Life in the present World.

Add to this: *That the Gospel of Christ strengthens the Obligations of the Law of Nature.*

It furnishes Men with far nobler Motives, to perform all the Duties of that Law; and threatens severer Punishments, for the Breach of it: and thus it highly conduces to the Welfare of Society and Government, and disposes Men of all Ranks and Stations, to be duly observant of, and beneficial to one another.

But when all is said and done, what shall we say to those sublime and retir'd Duties, of absolute Resignation to the Divine Will, of crucifying the Flesh, and living by Faith; if *Christianity* be a Cheat, and there be no future State of Rewards? This is the Point I am enquiring into. Of what Significancy would these be, upon the present *Hypothesis*? I do not think a Man is the less qualify'd for publick Business and Employment, or for the private Offices of Life, by being intimately conversant in these Duties.



Duties. But what I insist on, is, That if Christianity be an Imposture, the Advantage redounding from these Duties, will not answer the Cost and Pains Men must be at, before they acquire an Habit of performing them, in that manner, which the Gospel obliges the Christians to. For there must be a great deal of Application, Care and Watchfulness, and a Man must make it the commanding Business of his Life, or he will be able to do but very little good at it. And when all is done, 'tis certain, it is what is absolutely unnecessary with respect to any mere temporal Felicity or Advantage.

An exact and punctual discharge of Moral Duties, will be sufficient to preserve all Societies in a happy and flourishing Estate; and to establish a Man's own private Peace and Repose in the World. If you suppose the Gospel to be true, and such a sort of Happiness as it reveals, to be certain hereafter; then indeed all *this Discipline of Christianity*, presently becomes necessary in the highest Degree; and at the same time, appears to be the most wise and excellent Contrivance, that can possibly be imagin'd. Upon the *Supposition of a glorious Life in the World to come*, 'tis plain, why Faith and Mortification and Self-denial, should be so strictly enjoin'd in the present Life; namely, because by the Practice of these Duties, Mens Minds are disingag'd from the base and sordid Objects of this World, and brought to a Relish suitable to the Nature of the heavenly State, where all their Joys and Delights will be pure, and no Objects will ever be presented to entertain them, but what are truly noble and sublime. But if you make the Gospel a vile Cheat and a Fiction, and take away the Hopes of that blessed Life,



Life, to prepare Men for which, these inward and abstracted Duties of *Christianity* are (in their very Nature) plainly calculated; then they are all of them apparently useless and insignificant, as to any valuable End or Purpose: And therefore (being so very difficult to perform) they are a heavy Load, and a mighty Disadvantage on the side of those Persons, who believe themselves bound to live in the constant Practice of them. Nor is this at all inconsistent with what I asserted before, *viz. That Christianity (whether true or false) does exceedingly conduce to the temporal Welfare and Felicity of Mankind.* For the Principles which this Religion puts into Men, may be, and ('tis plain) actually are such as tend to make all the World easy and secure: and yet at the same time, the Discipline and the Duties of it, may be very hard upon those, who have given themselves up to the Practice thereof.

To conclude then: Who are the *happy Men*, (upon the present *Hypothesis*) Those who live free from the severe Labours and Toils of a multitude of very costly Duties, giving their *Passions and Appetites* all the Scope that the *Law of Nature* will fairly allow; or those who are thus bridled and confin'd, and spend precious Time in the Duties of a rigorous *Service*, which will never be of any Advantage to them? Surely Ease and Freedom, in conjunction with Safety, are enough to make Mens Lives truly happy. And (upon the present *Hypothesis*) these Gentlemen are as secure, as they are free; provided they do but keep within the Bounds, prescrib'd by the eternal Law of Nature and Reason. Because, how much soever they transgress the Rules of the Gospel, yet they have

no danger to apprehend upon that score; since the Authority of all the Gospel-Laws, vanishes with the Doctrine of *Christ's Resurrection*.

So that it is past all doubt, the *Deists* have by much the Advantage, of those that believe the Gospel, with respect to the present World; if it be so, that the latter lie under a Delusion, as to this great Article of their Faith.

## S E C T. X.

**I** Hope what I have advanc'd here, will not be misunderstood; and that no Man will think, I am for throwing off all Regard to the *Laws of Nature* in the present Life, upon the Supposition, that we have no Rewards to expect hereafter: *That Men may be as extravagant and licentious as they please, and live like Beasts while they are here; if all views of future Happiness and Immortality be taken away.*

The very Thoughts of this strike a Man with Horror; and no *Christian* (to be sure) will ever entertain, much less stand by such a sort of Notion.

For my own part, I declare, I am far from imagining, *That our Obligations or Encouragement to any of the common Duties of Morality and Natural Religion, would, upon this Supposition, be either weakened or taken away.* For, First, 'Tis in it self eternally fit and reasonable, that we should own the Sovereign Author of our Being, and thank him for the innumerable Benefits we receive in the present Life, even without Expectations of future Rewards from him. We owe him Praise and Acknowledgment for the Good we actually receive at his hands; and a Prospect or no Prospect of more Mercies behind, has nothing to do with our thank-

ful Returns for those that are present. 'Tis true, if we have a View of more Blessings coming to us, we may be more chearful and enlarg'd in our Thanksgivings to so kind a Benefactor. But however, by receiving from him, we become infinitely indebted to him; and therefore to praise him for what we have, is our indispensable Duty. These Duties therefore, which are founded upon God's *Creation*, and Preservation of us, and providential Disposal of the Blessings of the present Life, are of a sure and lasting Obligation; and while Human Nature continues, they must needs be of Force. And the taking away the Hope of a future Reward, can no more take off our Obligations to the Practice of these, than the having no Prospect of a second or third Mercy, can discharge us from the Duty of being thankful for a first, which we now actually enjoy.

And then, *Secondly*, as for the Practice of moral Vertues; a Man's own temporal Felicity, and the Well-being of Human Society, do necessarily require a nice and strict Observance of these. For example; *Temperance* is absolutely necessary, both to our longer Enjoyment of the Comforts of the World, and to our sweeter and more exquisite Relish of them. Without *Prudence and Discretion* in the Management of the Affairs of Life, we can neither secure our selves in the Possession of any Good we enjoy, nor make the best of it, to improve it as Opportunity shall offer, for a farther increase of our Happiness here: In a word, without this, we can neither avoid Dangers, live free from Abuses and Impositions, nor with any tolerable Reputation amongst Men. To be *affable and courteous* in our Deportment towards others, is the way to gain an universal Affection and Esteem, and to engage Men to be ready to do us any good  
Offices

Offices that lie in their Power, when we may have an urgent Occasion for them. To be *just and righteous in our Dealings with all Men*, is the way to be free from Injuries and Assaults, and never to make any of our Fellow-Creatures our Enemies: And consequently, there's no living safely and quietly in the World without it: *Since there's no Man whatsoever, so mean and little, but if provok'd by bad and unjust Usage, may, some time or other, have it in his Power to give very costly and dangerous Proofs of his Resentments.* And so to have *due Reverence, and a loyal Regard for our Superiors*, is what even good Breeding, Honour, Interest, and Self-preservation, will oblige us to. We can't transgress due Bounds here, without apparent Hazards; and to be good Subjects (if there were no other Reasons for being so) is the directest way, either to make or mend our Fortunes in the World. And the same Principles will engage us, not only to be quiet and faithful, but also useful and industrious Members of the Communities in which we live; zealous to promote their Good, and careful to prevent all Mischief that threatens them, as far as we can. *For our own private Interests and those of the Publick, are very closely link'd together;* and when the whole Body suffers, 'tis much if each Member has not its share in the common Calamity. 'Tis true, that Men who have dar'd to be guilty of such unnatural Baseness and Treachery, as to intrigue with Enemies, and sacrifice the Interests of the Publick to them, may have sometimes come off without their deserv'd Punishment. But this rarely happens: And such Crimes are so hateful both to God and to Mankind in general, and even to those who can be glad to make use of them to serve their own Turn; that they most commonly come home, either sooner or la-



ter, with sufficient Vengeance to the Commit-  
ters of them. Divine Providence, which dispo-  
ses all Men in the World, where they should be  
useful and serviceable in their Places, rarely fails to  
find such out; and *the very Tempters to the Treason,*  
*often become the Dispensers of a just Punishment to the*  
*Traitors.*

So that without any Prospect of future Re-  
wards, here are strong and undeniable Obligations  
to the Practice of all these moral Duties. As long  
as the present State of the World lasts, and Men  
live together in Communities, there will be urgent  
Reasons why such Rules should be carefully ob-  
serv'd, both in their Management of themselves,  
and their Deportment towards one another.

## S E C T. XI.

**T**HUS we have seen, what Circumstances,  
both of Duty and Danger, the *Christians* are  
plac'd under in the present World, in consequence  
of their Adherence to the Religion taught by  
*Christ Jesus.*

*I shall now make two or three general Reflections,*  
*upon what has been discours'd under this Head, con-*  
*cerning the Nature of the Christian Religion.*

*First,* 'Tis plain, that this Institution is in it  
self admirably well adapted to the Design of  
rectifying all the Disorders of Human Nature,  
and the improving it with all such Vertues and  
Qualifications as are necessary (in the very Na-  
ture of the thing) to render it truly beautiful  
and excellent. Nor would I be understood here,  
to speak only of what the *Christian Religion* it self  
makes to be Vertue or Vice; but of that, which  
the common Sense and Reason of Mankind pro-  
nounces



nounces to be so, abstracting from all Revelation or positive Law, either to approve or condemn it as such.

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## S E C T. XII.

*Secondly,* **T**HAT it will appear to every Man, who considers it impartially, to have a direct Tendency to fit and qualify us for a future blessed State; *Such a one, as we our selves, if we think any thing worthily of God, shall judg it the most consonant to his Perfections, to prepare for reasonable Creatures, whom he delights to make happy:* And that this is the great Drift and Scope of all the Gospel-Discipline and Precepts, how useful soever they are otherwise, to promote a temporal Felicity. And tho this may be infer'd easily enough, from that short Account before given, of the Nature of the *Christian Institution*; yet I think it worth while to illustrate it a little particularly, by a brief *Rationale* of the three principal Duties enjoin'd therein.

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## S E C T. XIII.

**A**ND, *First* of all, as to a *Life of Faith*. If it be so, that we are design'd for another State hereafter, so very different from that we are now in, and where we shall be dispos'd of for ever; then how fit and reasonable is it, that we should accustom our selves to serious Thoughts of it before-hand? That our Minds should be thorowly convinc'd in general, of the certain

Truth and Reality of such a State ; and particularly, of the glorious and happy Circumstances, which righteous and holy Persons are plac'd in there? *For such a Conviction of the Mind is the most natural way to set all other good Principles at work ; and thereby to bring us to such a sort of Temper and Conversation, as may be in some measure conformable to the Manner of Life we shall live in that World.*

The Understanding must always be persuaded, before we can proceed to any just and regular Action : And therefore, whether the Gospel-Revelation be true or no, that Doctrine of the *Christians* is certainly true ; That Obedience and good Works are the certain Corollaries of a sound and true Faith.

Besides, a Habit of serious believing Meditation, is the properest means that can be, to make the future State familiar to us, and so to wear off the frightful gloomy Apprehensions, of passing into a World wholly unknown. And is not this infinitely better, than taking a Leap in the Dark (with our modern Unbelievers) or going off the Stage in a Fog of Doubts, whether Annihilation, or some new and strange Mode of Being, will not be the very next Step to dying here? I do not say, but *Christians*, as well as other Men, have, and may die under Doubts and Fears. For supposing that the Gospel is a Divine Revelation ; yet it is not presently necessary, that all those who believe it, should be as different from other People in their Dying, as the Precepts of it, if strictly observ'd, would make them to be in their Living. But what I say, is, that if the Gospel be a Divine Revelation, we have then a sure Provision made for Dying safely, and a sufficient Antidote too against Dying uncomfortably. And if matters ever  
happen

happen otherwise with a sincere *Christian* (as for many Reasons, both natural and moral, it may be, by the Sufferance of Divine Providence) yet there is enough in the Promises of the Gospel, to answer for all that, and secure a Man, that he shall be no loser by it in the World to come.

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## S E C T. XIV.

Secondly, **I**T cannot be imagin'd, that in a State where God designs to make Men perfectly happy, *They shall ever be taken up in mean and pitiful Conversations with things of so vile and unsatisfying a Nature, as they are employ'd about here in this World.* And therefore, that Human Nature (when put into the Possession of such a Felicity) shall not retain any of those base ignoble Passions, which tend so much to the Disturbance of a happy Life both in Publick and Private; and set those who are Slaves to them, upon a level with the Beasts themselves. If we can find any Reasons to persuade our selves, that the Author of our Beings will make us happy in another Life; we may be satisfy'd that he will never do it in so sordid and inferior a way, as *such Objects and such irregular Affections* would make it to be.

How reasonable a Duty then is *Mortification*? What is this but curbing the Extravagancy, and altering the Bent of sinful Dispositions? And is it not the right way to begin now; since our Inclinations must be so refin'd, and our way of Converse and Fruition so chang'd hereafter? Let us but think in what manner we shall live Above! Substantial Truth will be the Repast of our Minds, and every Act of Love and Desire bestow'd on

such things, as will be *worth the Attention of a reasonable Soul, and fill it with a lasting Satisfaction.* But then our Tempers must be fitted and proportion'd to this before-hand. The Songs of Angels would be but unpleasant Musick, to a Man that never lov'd or thought of God in this Life. That quick and chearful Dispatch of Duty, that ready Obedience to the Divine Commands, which must be the great Delight of all the heavenly Inhabitants; how shocking and ungrateful would this be to the Humour of a vicious Person, *who had always made his own Will his Law, and never known any sort of Pleasure, superior to that of gratifying his Lusts?* To promote this Thought a little; let us but consider, *How strangely uncouth and disagreeable some particular Conversations and Modes of living here in the World are to Men, whose Interests, Tempers, Educations or Endowments, have given them quite another turn, and dispos'd them the contrary way.* Nay, tho such Methods of Living are in reality ever so much better than others are, yet they are infinitely worse to those Persons who have been always us'd to manage themselves after a different manner.

All the Learning and good Manners, the genteel Customs and noble Exercises of the most polite Nation upon Earth, would afford no Entertainment to a wild unhewn Savage, brought out of the Herd by mere Force, and pining with Desire to be there again. Nor would a Sinner, unprepar'd by the Grace of the Gospel, have more pleasing Sensations, *were he to be set down with all his irregular Passions and Dispositions, in that bright and holy Assembly above.* Every thing would be out of his Sphere, and quite beside his Taste and Relish. He would be sick of those Divine Pleasures, and tormented with not knowing how to behave, and where to bestow himself.

And



And therefore, since we cannot suppose, that God will ever bring us to such a Place as Heaven, to make us uneasy and miserable there; how just and fit is it that we should now mortify all those fleshly Affections, which are so incompatible with it, and cannot (in the very nature of the thing) every be carry'd thither along with us?

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## S E C T. XV.

**A**ND, Thirdly, *The Exercise of that universal Love and Charity*, which the Gospel obliges us to, has likewise a direct Tendency to the great End we are speaking of: Because this naturally tends to carry off all that Sourness and Malignity of Temper, that base and selfish Disposition, which is so contrary to the heavenly State. By the Practice of these Vertues our Souls are enlarg'd, and our Dispositions render'd sweet and benign. We become more like to God our heavenly Father, *whose Mercy and Goodness are over all his Works*. We are conform'd more to the Spirit and Genius of that World, *where we shall be united by the strictest Bonds of Love, to all that share with us in the same Felicity*. For whatever evil Affections reign in our Breasts, and break forth amongst us, to the Disturbance of Peace and brotherly Love, and our very great Estrangement from one another in this World; 'tis certain, we shall live together in a far better Understanding in the next. There all Jealousy and Suspicion, Envy and Emulation, Wrath and Contention, will cease for ever. 'Twill be the delightful Work of all that come thither, to rejoice in God, and one another's Happiness; and conspire together in  
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the most perfect manner, to obey and glorify Him. And what then, should any thing of a base and sordid, or a sour invidious Temper do in such a State, and amongst such Company? And how should we ever be freed from the prevalence of such Principles and Habits, as plainly tend to render us incapable of this blessed Life; but by being train'd up under the *Gospel-Discipline*, which does both enjoin and teach us, how to subdue and get rid of them?

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## S E C T. XVI.

*Thirdly,* FROM what has been discours'd of the Nature of the *Christian Religion*, arises a very plain and easy Account of the Origin of Deism.

All that the incredulous People say, and all that they do, by way of Opposition to the *Christian Religion*, will follow so naturally from one simple Principle (which no body can make a difficulty of allowing) that one would almost be tempted to conclude, without any further Inquiry, *that this must be the true and genuine Cause of all*. For only suppose a Person to go so far, as to make such a Conclusion as this with himself:

I will endure no Curb nor Restraint upon me, in the Prosecution of my Design of being happy in this World; but whatever I shall at any time believe to make for my Repose, or the Entertainment of my Passions (by what Names soever other People may call it, whether allowable or forbidden) I will endeavour to gratify my self with the Enjoyment of it, to the utmost of my Power.

Now all the Phenomena of *Deism* will be solv'd by this, without any more ado. For from hence it  
pre-

presently follows, That *whatever stands in the way to cross this Resolution, must be vigorously and heartily oppos'd*. Let it otherwise be ever so rational and just, yet if it thwarts the grand Design, of a free and uninterrupted Enjoyment of the present World; it must be treated as things always are, which pretend to deprive Men of what is most grateful and agreeable to them; that is, be expos'd in all respects, as far as possible.

And therefore the Gospel, which pretends to abridg Men of so much Liberty, and obliges them to a strictly abstemious and self-denying Life, and a ready Submission to all Sufferings, which the Power and Malice of the World may at any time inflict for the Profession of it; must of course be deny'd to be a Divine Revelation, and made the mere Invention of a Set of crafty designing Men, who were proud to be the Heads of a new Religion, and fond of making Mankind stoop to such Laws as they should think fit to impose on them. And hence the *Christians* must be represented too, as a credulous bigotted sort of People, who have not Sense nor Sagacity enough to see thro the Imposture; but are held fast in their fond Belief, by the Artifices and Management of those Persons, whose Business and Interest it is, and has been always, to maintain and propagate the Cheat. All this will follow, from one stated Resolution, to be under no Restraints, in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of the Pleasures of the World. How unreasonable soever the Inferences are in themselves; yet they naturally follow, upon the making such a Conclusion in a Man's own Mind.

## S E C T. XVII.

**H**OWever, tho all this be very plain and clear, yet I would by no means be thought to assert, *That this is the only possible Cause of Deism*; or that all who disbelieve the *Christian Revelation*, do it upon this Principle alone.

I believe it not impossible for a Man to be a *Deist* upon Theory, or mere speculative Principles. Natural Pride and Conceit, wrong Notions of Human Nature, and particularly of the Power of the Understanding; by which Men set it up for an absolute and unlimited Judg of all things, and lay this down for a Rule (which is demonstrably a fallacious one) *That nothing is true which the Mind cannot comprehend by its own native Force*; (As if an infinitely wise and profound Being ought never to say any thing to such Creatures as we are, but what we should presently take, and penetrate into all the Reasons of; and as if it were any more unfit in the nature of things, or unbecoming the Perfections of God, to propose unsearchable Mysteries to the Understanding, than to impose *Laws on the Will and Affections* :) These, I say, and such like Causes, may lead some Men (who have otherwise a regard to Vertue and common Morality) into inveterate Prejudices against *Christianity*. For setting themselves to try the Doctrines and Mysteries of it by their own false Rules, and finding they will not square with them, they presently condemn them as absurd and irrational, and therefore impossible ever to come from God; and so all the rest is rejected of course. And thus by the means of one fundamental Blunder, the Gospel

Gospel is thrown by, the whole *Christian Religion* made an Imposture in a trice, and they set up for profess'd Enemies and Opposers of it. But I imagine this to be the Case but of few. 'Tis possible that others (who may, for all that I know, approve of the Morality of the Gospel, and practise it too, as far as it keeps pace with the Law of Nature) may yet think the inward and abstracted Duties which it enjoins, too cumberfom, and perhaps such an unreasonable Tax upon Mankind, as an infinitely merciful God (according to their Notions of infinite Mercy and Goodness) would never impose. And tho the Error of this sort of *Deists* takes its rise from a Principle very different from that of the former, yet it is as bad, and sticks as fast: Wrong Notions of the Government of God over rational Creatures, are not less pernicious, nor may they do less Mischief to some, than an over-weaning Conceit of the Power of Human Understanding, may to others. I can only say, with respect to these Gentlemen on both sides, *That when they have carefully corrected their Notions of the Supreme Being, by what is demonstrable of his infinite Perfections; and when they have likewise rectify'd their Schemes about Human Nature, according to what plain Fact and Experience shew us to be undeniably true of it:* That then these Objections against *Christianity* will cease; and those on one side, will no more think the sublimest Doctrines unfit to be believ'd, than those on the other, the most abstracted Duties unreasonable to be perform'd.

And this is all the Answer I think is owing to that sort of Men.



## S E C T. XVIII.

**B**UT notwithstanding all these Concessions of things that are possible, and may be; the Case is quite alter'd, when we come to speak of what is probable, and most likely to be. And here, tho the *Libertine* and sensual *Deist*, and the seemingly speculative or rational ones, do all unanimously agree, in *exclaiming against some Doctrines and Mysteries of the Christian Religion, which, they say, are absurd and contradictory, and affront all the Reason of Mankind; or else pretend to take offence at some trivial Corruptions and Abuses of the Canon; little Difficulties which they call insolvable, because they know not how, or do not care to attempt the Solution of them; and greater than the greatest of which, they easily pass over, and pardon every day in profane Authors:* Yet after all, to deal freely and plainly with them, I must say, that there are Reasons enough to make People firmly believe, *That the Precepts and Prohibitions of the Gospel are the Parts of it which give the main Offence.*

## S E C T. XIX.

**F**OR, *First*, Few People resent *Affronts offer'd to their Reason*, so much as they do *Confinement and Impositions on their Liberty*. Because *Passion and Appetite govern more Men, and most Men more, than Reason and Understanding do; and so are much more likely to be the occasion of the Quarrel.*

*Secondly,*



*Secondly*, Where pure Scruples of the Mind are the occasion of a Controversy, it seldom proceeds with so much Malignity and Virulence, as this Dispute has always been manag'd on their side withal. Close Reasoning is the proper and genuine Revenge of an affronted Understanding: As on the other hand, Satyr and Raillery always betray Interest and Passion; and shews they are far more concern'd in the matter than Reason and Judgment.

*Thirdly*, But in the next place, If the great Offence taken against *Christianity*, were occasion'd by the Difficulties of some Doctrines propos'd by it; *Why should the Christian Religion meet with so much worse treatment in general from these Gentlemen, than another Religion does, which in their Judgments as well as ours, is full of manifest Absurdities, and carries all the plain Marks of an Imposture along with it; but at the same time does not restrain and tie Men up, so as the Christian Religion does?* They easily conclude, that the Religion I intend here, is that of *Mahomet*; which abstracting from all the false and invidious Representations made of it by the misguided Zeal of some *Christians*, is undoubtedly an Institution unworthy of God to appoint, and unfit for *reasonable Creatures* to receive. If this be question'd, there are plentiful Demonstrations of it to be fetch'd, from such Accounts and Records of that Religion, as the most learned Professors thereof do themselves own to be Genuine and Authentick. I must not enlarge much on this Head (which is something foreign to my present purpose) and shall therefore only suggest a few things briefly.

## S E C T. XX.

*First,* **T**IS beyond Dispute, that *Mahomet*, the Author of this Religion, was a Person of a vicious profligate Life, and so far from behaving himself like a Messenger sent from God, to teach Mankind Piety and Devotion; that he was in his whole Conversation a signal Example of the contrary.

*Secondly*, That the Canon of his Religion, besides many Impertinences and Absurdities, which are plainly nauseous, contains gross and palpable Falsties, both in Matter of Fact and Doctrine too. Some perhaps who have a very great Opinion of the Moral Part of this Religion, may think this latter Charge, as to the Doctrines, unjust: But those Persons may be very easily satisfied, if they please. For when Doctrines are propos'd as Divine, which are evidently inconsistent with the Divine Perfections (as many of *Mahomet's* were) such Doctrines as these are very properly and justly call'd false ones.

*Thirdly*, That this Religion was evidently calculated to serve a carnal worldly Interest. The *Alcoran*, which is the standard of it, being shap'd and moulded according to Opportunity and Occasion, and fitted in all respects to answer the sordid Ends of the Writer thereof; who for that Reason added and substracted, alter'd and mended, upon every Emergency, as his own Affairs and the uncertain Humour of the People requir'd; and then at last threw all upon the Angel *Gabriel*, who was pretended ever now and then, to bring him down fresh Dispatches and Advices from Heaven.

*Fourthly*,

*Fourthly*, That as the first Contrivance, so all the great Steps towards the Propagation of this Religion, while in its Infancy, were made entirely by Fraud and Artifice; which wrought upon the Ignorance, and accommodated it self to the Temper and Vices of the People; and was shelter'd from Discovery, not only by their Illiterateness, but the Distance of Places, and the want of all Communication with the learned World.

*Fifthly* and Lastly, That 'tis a Religion in it self injurious and oppressive to Mankind, as it came afterwards to be planted and establish'd in the World by Force and Violence, and never offer'd any other Arguments to persuade Men of the Truth of it, but the Sword, or heavy Taxes and Exactions; not only persecuting and extorting what was not due from other Men, but also thereby depriving them of their natural Right and Liberty of judging for themselves, and using their Reason in matters of the greatest Concern to them.

These things are plain Fact, as every Man may satisfy himself that will but enquire. Now I beg leave of these Gentlemen to put a Question or two to them, upon the score of what I have been saying.

## S E C T. XXI.

*First*, **D**ID they ever demonstrate the Charge of Imposture against *Christianity*, with that undeniable Evidence that these Articles I have mention'd do demonstrate it against the Religion of *Mahomet*? Nay to come as low as possible, did they ever shew a tolerable Probability

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that

that the Religion of *Jesus Christ*, as contain'd in the New Testament, should be such a sort of Contexture as the other is; either upon the account of its Author, its Ends, its Propagation, the Rewards it promises, the Precepts it gives, or the Principles it inspires Men withal?

If they have ever fairly done this, then it may some way or other be made to appear.

If they have not: Then,

## S E C T. XXII.

Secondly, **W**HAT is there so loud a Cry of *Juggle and Imposture*, set up against Christianity (against which the Charge has scarce ever been attempted to be made out) rather than the Religion of Mahomet, where they grant the Forgery to be past Dispute? I would not be thought to encourage Insults and Affronts to any Religion, how false and preposterous soever it be. Men whom we believe to be in a wrong Way, should be better inform'd and argu'd with: But their Religion should not be treated in scandalous Terms; for this always heightens Prejudice, and breeds ill Blood. But what I speak of, is the arbitrary Proceeding of these Gentlemen, to pick out the *Christian Religion*, and only that, for the common Subject of their Banter and Raillery; when there is another at hand, which they know and own to be a Cheat; and at the same time 'scapes with very little Notice: At least they don't make a Trade, a stated Work of exposing this, as they do *Christianity*. If there be a little Fling, sometimes by Chance, at the *Alcoran*; the *Criticks* are always exer-



exercising their Wits upon the Gospel, and finding out little Flaws and Contradictions there, *which none else, who use the same sort of Senses and Faculties that they do, could ever yet discover.*

If the subtle Management of the pretended Prophet of the *Sarazens*, and his Comrades, happen once and again to be started as an Argument of Discourse, yet *Christ* and his *Apostles* are daily brought upon the Stage to entertain the most ludicrous Conversations: And when they are spar'd, the Preachers of the Gospel (who minister by a Commission from *Christ Jesus*, for carrying on the same Work in the World) are sure to pay for all, by the worst of Affronts and Reproaches; enduring herein, a part of that Persecution, which our Saviour had foretold, and which the Apostles themselves began to feel, who were made as the Dross and Offscouring of all things. Now, I say, *Why all this Noise and Stir about Christianity?* Here are two Religions before you, Gentlemen; the one of which you can demonstrate to be a Cheat, and the other you cannot (for if you could, you have sufficiently shewn your Inclinations that you would have done it) Why do you single out the Latter, and not the Former, to discharge all your Spleen and Choler against? Why *Jesus Christ* more than *Mahomet*? Is it because he is the *Prophet* whom the Country worships and adores? Most People for that very Reason (if they have no other) would think themselves oblig'd in good Manners, to keep their Resentments to themselves. Is it out of a charitable Regard to the Welfare of Mankind, because they should not be led away by a Delusion? Men are made to be wrought on by Arguments, and not by Scurrility and Reproach:



And 'tis certain, that if any Persons are persuaded to relinquish an Opinion, merely by hearing it abus'd and expos'd, they act irrationally, even tho they change their Minds ever so much for the better.

In short, whatever secret Reasons these Gentlemen may have for acting after this manner, this must be said, *That it will always look very suspiciously, to see Men (who set up for the Discovery of Imposture) touch so lightly upon a Religion, which makes amends for Absurdities, by plentiful Indulgences granted to Flesh and Blood; and take all Occasions to bear so hard upon Christianity, which strictly enjoins the Practice of all Vertue and Piety, and prohibits whatever is contrary thereto under the severest Penalties.*

## S E C T. XXIII.

**W**HAT has been spoken hitherto, relates to the *Christian Law*, by which the *Deists* (according to their own Principles) are not at all bound; and have for that Reason a much easier Life of it in the present World, than the *Christians* have. But there is something still to be said, with respect to the *Law of Nature*, to which all the great Pretensions of these Gentlemen are. And tho I do not urge this at all, as an Instance of their being more happy than the *Christians*, in the present Life; yet I urge it as an Argument with them to consider, *Of what signal Advantage Christianity would be to them in the Practice even of their own Natural Religion.* And therefore I would here lay down this Proposition: *viz. That those*  
*who*

who reject the Gospel-Revelation, are not so firmly bound by the Law of Nature it self, to the Practice of all those Duties which fall within the compass of that Law; as the Christians are, by virtue of the Principles they proceed upon, in Consequence of their Belief of the Gospel. This is an undoubted Truth, whatever Opinion they have concerning the Law of Nature; or what Notion soever it is that they take it in.

*First*, They may look on it, not as a Divine Law or Institution, in which the all-wise Creator has signify'd his Will concerning our Duty to himself, and Deportment towards one another; but only as something resulting from Education, Example, Custom, or the like: And consequently believe no other Sanction to be annex'd thereto, besides that of the present good and bad Consequences of the Observance or Neglect of it. Now in this Case, 'tis plain, that it is but a very slender Guard upon a Man's Actions and Conversation in the World. With such Notions as these, he is left at full liberty to determine Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, just as his Inclination or Interest, or Opportunity shall prompt him. And we know that some of the modern Opposers of *Christianity* have espous'd these Principles; being led to it by the Necessity of their Scheme, which naturally draws on one Invention or *Hypothesis*, to support another before advanc'd. They have gone so far, as to take away all absolute intrinsecal Distinction between Good and Evil; making no other difference between them, than what Time or Convenience, or the Humours and Practices of Men do make: So that Good is chang'd into Evil, or Evil into Good, by the mere alteration of external Circumstances. And tho it must be allow'd, that this *Hypothesis* is of a

pretty antient Date, and that some \* *Poets* and *Philosophers* for many Ages ago, have talk'd after this manner; yet 'tis true also, that others of superior Sense and Reputation, have detested these Notions, and propagated others more worthy of God and Human Nature. And indeed there is just Reason, why such Schemes as these should be abhor'd of all Mankind, that make any pretences to live soberly and rationally. Because there can be no manner of Defence or Security, where such Principles as these take place. For at this rate, Men may be guilty of the worst Crimes that can be committed, and yet bring themselves off as innocent when they have done. For they have nothing but Punishment from the Laws of the Society whereof they are Members, to keep them in awe; and if they can but secure themselves from that Danger, they are ready prepar'd to trample all other Obligations under foot; even those, which in the Opinion, and by the common Consent of all Nations whatsoever, ought to be held the most Sacred and Inviolable.

And then, another thing to be consider'd too, is, That (whatever these Gentlemen make of the Law of Nature) they have it all entirely in their own keeping, and consequently at their own dispose; because by their Principles they are for no *reveal'd* or written Laws. 'Tis all lock'd up in their own Breasts, where 'tis liable to any Management they shall think fit to bestow on it,

\* ——— 'Ουδὲν ἀν πάντι καλόν

'Ουδ' αἰσχρόν. ἀλλὰ ταῦτ' ἐπίησε λαβών

'Ο ΚΑΙΡΟΣ αἰσχερόν, καὶ διαλλάξας καλόν. Opusc. Mythol. Pag. 715.

Τὰ δὲ καλὰ καὶ τὰ δίκαια αἰεὶ ὧν ἡ πολιτικὴ σκοπεῖται, ταυτὴν ἔχει διαφορὰν καὶ πλεόνει, ὥστε δοκεῖν νόμῳ μόνον εἶναι, φύσει δὲ μή. Aristot. Ethic. l. i. c. i.

either by way of Dispensation, Abrogation, Exposition, or Accommodation to a present Case. Now methinks, as the larger Government of Kingdoms and Countries, which are thus administered, are by all People justly call'd Tyrannical and Arbitrary; so there is as much Reason for the Use of the same Terms, when the Government of a Man's Life and Passions stands upon the same precarious Foundation. It may well be call'd an Arbitrary one, because it is left entirely to a Man's own Pleasure, how he will behave and dispose of himself.

Nor can I see why People should pretend to cry out against such Forms of Government amongst Mankind; why they should argue so freely against the Danger and Unreasonableness of them; and at the same time set up for absolute unlimited lawless Monarchs over themselves, and approve such a Regimen in their own Breasts, as they abhor and condemn in the World.

Now tho it must be granted, that Men (who are willing to transgress) may abuse *written* as well as unwritten Laws, and expound them so as may best serve their own Turn upon Occasion; yet it must be allow'd, that in the nature of the thing Revelation is a better Guard, than a bare Scheme of Principles without it.

For Men must take more Pains to conquer the Sense of a standing written Law, which is ready to confront them upon all Occasions; they must more industriously tamper with their Passions, and bribe their Understandings, before they can bring themselves to believe what they have a mind to believe, in contradiction to the Words of an express and formal Declaration of God Almighty's Will; than there can be any Pretence or Occasion for, when they have no more than their own Thoughts

and Ideas to manage. These are flexible Things, and a Man may much more easily turn and wind them as he pleases, than he can evade a plain and positive Law; *which determines the Kinds and Measures of his Duty, and threatens Disobedience in such Terms as require long Practice and Experience, to make handson Salvos and Distinctions to get over.*

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## S E C T. XXIV.

ON the other hand, if we consider the state of the Case with respect to the *Christians*, we shall find a very great difference. For, as to the *Law of Nature*: First, They believe it be a \* *Divine Impression* on the reasonable Nature of Man, by which he is inform'd what is good and evil, and directed how to behave himself after such a manner, as a Creature so made and endow'd as he is, ought to do. Now when 'tis look'd on as a *Law of God*, such a Sense of it is more likely to awe Men into a serious regard to it, and to produce good Effects in their Lives and Conversations, than that slight Opinion of it before mention'd.

*Secondly*, They believe this Law to have a Sanction of Rewards and Punishments, which respect not only *This*, but a *future Life* also: And this is a Consideration of infinitely greater moment, than that of all the temporal Advantages or Disad-

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\* *This was the Notion of some of the wiser Heathens, as well as of the Christians. Archytas, speaking of Man (in Libr. Sapientix) and his Advantages above all the rest of the Creatures, adds these Words; Ένεχίεσθε ἢ ἐπιστημύνατο τὸ ΘΕΪΟΝ αὐτοῦ, τὸ τῷ παντὶς λόγῳ ΣΥΨΤΗΜΑ. Opusc. Mythol. Pag. 732.*



vantages, which can possibly redound from a Man's Obedience or Disobedience thereto.

*Thirdly* and *Lastly*, It is expressly written in a Book, which they esteem as a Divine Revelation; and therefore can't be so easily eluded, nor render'd subject to such Management, as a wandering Notion in a Man's Mind may be.

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## S E C T. XXV.

**B**UT, *Secondly*, Suppose these Gentlemen to take the Law of Nature in that Sense, which of all others will give it the most Authority over them; that is, to believe it a *Divine Law*: Yet still the Obligations of it are much stronger on the *Christians*, than they can possibly be on *them*. For the Law of Nature is it self taken into the Body of the Laws of *Christ Jesus*, and composes one Part of that Institution which the *Christians* have receiv'd from him, and believe to be of Divine Authority. Besides all those sublime Doctrines and Precepts, which are specifically distinct from, and superlatively transcendent to those of the Law of Nature; the Gospel contains the entire substance of that Law it self, together with divers excellent Improvements and Explications thereof, made by *Jesus Christ*, and enforce'd and urg'd by him, upon all that embrace his Religion. So that over and above that Obligation, which is common to others with them, consider'd merely as Men; here's a new one resulting from their Belief and Acknowledgment of the Gospel-Revelation: Inasmuch that the Duties enjoin'd even by the Natural Law, are now to be perform'd by them, out of a devout regard  
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to God, not only as the Author of *Nature*, and the bountiful Benefactor of Mankind; but also as the Author and Fountain of all those inexpressible Benefits, which (as *Christians*) they believe they are made Partakers of by *Jesus Christ*. Now in the Nature of the thing it self, the strength of all Obligations does increase proportionably to the Value and Moment of those things, which are the Foundations of them; and consequently, this new Obligation which lies on the *Christians* (as such) must be as much more powerful than that which respects them and others, consider'd only as Men; as the Blessings of Redemption purchas'd and bestow'd by *Jesus Christ*, are superior in their Notions to the common Blessings of Nature. And therefore this Obligation added to the former, must have as much more force to engage the *Christians* to a strict and conscientious regard to the Law of Nature, than the Former alone can have to produce the same effect on those Gentlemen who reject the Gospel: As much more (I say) as the Benefits of Redemption added to those of Nature and Providence, do transcend the Latter taken by themselves. So that, even allowing these Persons to receive and obey the Law of Nature as a Law of God, and out of a Sense of Duty to him (which Concession notwithstanding may be more kind than just) yet still their Obligations fall exceedingly short of those which the *Christians* lie under. But if they have no regard to it as a Law of God, but perform Natural Duties from such Principles only, as Education, Custom, Interest, Affectation, Fear, Gratitude, or the like: Then, I think, the Odds are almost beyond Comparison; and it cannot well be express'd, how much more firmly the *Christians* are bound to these Duties, than those who disown the Gospel-Revelation.

## S E C T. XXVI.

**C***Orroll*, 1. There is a better Security for the exact and punctual Discharge of all moral Duties, from those who believe the Gospel of *Christ*, than from those who do not. For there must needs be the best Security (in Reason, and the Nature of the thing) where the strongest Obligations lie: And 'tis apparent, that they lie on the side of those, who own the Gospel to be a Divine Revelation. I don't say here what *Christians* actually are, but what by their Principles they ought to be, and what may rationally be expected from them, as just and due by virtue of their Profession. Many indeed, who call themselves *Christians*, do scandalously transgress the Laws of Nature and the Gospel too. But (by their own Principles) their Obligations to do otherwise, are unchangeably fix'd; and they run infinite Hazards, by being guilty of such Enormities; for their own Law condemns them to everlasting Punishments, without true Repentance and Amendment. Now what Men cannot do without exposing themselves to the last degree of Danger and Inconvenience, they may be said (in a Moral Sense) not to be able to do. And therefore, whatever Duties I expect the Performance of, from Men in any Place or Station; I may be more secure of them, who must expose and endanger themselves to so high a degree, if they are false and unfaithful; than I can of those, who have no such Principles to be a Guard upon them, and prevent the Breach of their Duty and Trust. If they are sincerely such as I take them for, their Principles will govern them;

them; and the Danger they are expos'd to, will be a Guard upon them, to keep them from habitual Excursions: If they are not such, they don't fall within the Bounds of the present Question. Nay, tho I make the Supposition, that the *Christians* are deluded, in taking the Gospel for a Divine Revelation, yet the Argument will proceed all one as before. For since the Belief, that it is a Divine Revelation, is so firmly rooted in their Minds; then till the contrary is plainly demonstrated to them, they must needs discharge all Duties and Offices whatsoever, just in the same manner, and with the same care, as they would do, if the Case were otherwise, and they were not deceiv'd at all.

*Coroll. 2.* As far as the strongest Engagements to the Practice of Moral Duties, can be suppos'd to have an Influence on the Peace and good Order of the World, or the Welfare of any particular Society; so far is it likely, that those who embrace the *Christian Religion*, should be better Members of Society, and more useful in all Relations, than those who disown the Divine Authority thereof.

## S E C T. XXVII.

**I** Have now shewn in the foregoing Particulars, all that I think will follow without Exception; upon the *Hypothesis*, That the *Christians* are deceiv'd as to the Matter of Fact of Christ's Resurrection.

The *Deists* (I know very well) go farther yet, and draw another Inference, which is very much to our Disadvantage, *viz.* That the *Christians* will be liable to as severe and terrible Punishments, if the Gospel should be found to be an Imposture at last; as they

they themselves, on the other side, shall be, if it should prove to be a Divine Revelation.

For say they, If it should be so, then here you have affronted the Majesty of Heaven to a very high degree, in believing him to be the Author of so vile an Imposture, as your whole Religion in that Case must be: Besides, you have paid Divine Honours, and given religious Worship to Jesus Christ, who was never invested with any Authority by God Almighty, nor had any Commission from him, either to teach those Doctrines, or establish that Discipline in the World which you have receiv'd as Divine, and laid all the Stress of your Salvation upon.

And therefore, as you have reflected on the Attributes of God, and robb'd him of his Glory to such a degree, by embracing this Delusion as his Contrivance and Appointment; so to vindicate the Honour of his injur'd Perfections, and express his infinite Abhorrence of such Crimes, he can do no less than severely punish those who have committed them.

'Tis well known, that these Gentlemen do talk after this rate; and this is their stated Answer now-a-days, to a Man who urges the dangerous Consequences of Infidelity upon them. There was no manner of Reason why I should conceal or dissemble any part of what they say upon this Occasion.

For as 'tis but giving them fair play, so the Cause of Christianity can't suffer any Prejudice by it; nor will any of its Professors, I believe, be scar'd, to hear these Gentlemen bid them expect the most dismal Punishments in the next World that Almighty Justice can inflict, if the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection be not true.



## S E C T. XXVIII.

**H**Owever, as these Gentlemen seem very fond of this Notion, and object it with a Briskness, that argues they esteem it a Difficulty not easily to be solv'd; 'tis reasonable that we bestow a little Pains upon the Examination of it: That we may see whether it carries any thing of strict and just Argument along with it; or whether it be something started, purely to evade the force of the Argument, drawn from the Consideration of the Danger these Gentlemen are in; and so to amuse those People, who otherwise might be inclin'd to think, that the *Christians* reason with too much Advantage upon that Topick. There are three things therefore, that are to be reply'd (in the general) to this Objection of theirs.

*First*, That supposing it to be ever so certain and true, *it is nothing at all to the purpose.*

*Secondly*, That it is (as to them) *absolutely Doubtful and Precarious*; because they have no *Principles* to make any positive Inference from.

*Thirdly*, That it is (in it self) *palpably False and Wrong*, as will appear upon an exact comparison of the Circumstances of the Case on both sides, according as we suppose the Gospel to be either a mere Fiction, or a Divine Revelation.

## S E C T. XXIX.

First, **I** Say, That *their Objection of Danger to the Christians, is nothing at all to the purpose.* For in the way of Argument, nothing is to the purpose, but what has a real Tendency some way or other to help or benefit the Cause of that Party, who have a Difficulty press'd on them; either by shewing that it is not so far expos'd, as the Adversary's Argument makes it to be, or else that the Adversary cannot argue in that manner he does, in making the Assault upon it. Now pray, how does this any way help the Cause of the *Deists* (who are evidently in very great Danger, if the *Resurrection of Christ* be true) that the *Christians* are obnoxious to as much Punishment, if the *Resurrection* be not true? Suppose what they alledg to be granted, does it render their Condition less miserable and perplex'd? Does it take off any thing from the Force of what the *Christians* say, or hinder them from concluding what they intend? If it does not, to what End do these Gentlemen talk thus? Is this a Subject to be trifled with; and should not Men speak to the Purpose (if they ever intend to do it) when their Souls are concern'd in the Argument? Were a Dispute to be manag'd purely for a Trial of Skill; then to shuffle and digress from the Matter in hand, so as by any means whatsoever to blunder an Adversary, and stop the Progress of his Argument, were a more pardonable piece of Folly. But in a matter so grave and serious as this, to talk off from the Point, and urge what can neither help on one side, nor hinder on the other; is acting a Part, that I  
am

am sure all the right Reason and Prudence in the World must necessarily condemn.

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## S E C T. XXX.

**B**ESIDES, I must say, that this Proceeding of theirs is as *disingenuous*, as it is foreign to the Business in hand. For the Case stands thus.

The *Christians* shew how very terrible and peremptory, the Threatnings of the Gospel are against the finally impenitent Despisers of it: and they do this, not with a design to frighten these Gentlemen into Bigotry and Superstition, as they pretend to imagine; but to excite them to a due Care of themselves, that they may escape that possible Danger, of which the Gospel gives them so very dismal a Prospect. Now the most prudent and ingenuous way for these Gentlemen to go to work, after such warning, would be to argue and enquire, and bring the matter to a strict Examination; that so, if they found the *Christians* had good Grounds and Reasons for what they say, they might set themselves to the Use of proper Means, in order to make all things safe and secure on their own Side; or if not, then indeed having prov'd all to be mere Juggle and Delusion, they might boldly charge the Fallacy upon the *Christians*, and despise the Danger they were threatened with, as the mere Bagbear of an Imposture.

Whereas, instead of this, they immediately retort a Charge of Idolatry and Irreligion upon us; and tell us, that if we are mistaken, our Damnation will be as severe as theirs: As if they could be contented to be liable to be damn'd, upon one *Hypothesis*, so the *Christians* be but as much expos'd upon

upon

upon another. If a Man (whose Life were really believ'd to be in danger, and were accordingly warn'd of it by his Neighbour, out of pure Love and Charity) should reply after this fashion, *That he should rest satisfy'd about that matter, since the Monitor himself, and a thousand more, would be in as much danger of losing their Lives, if such and such things should happen to come to pass*: Every one would say, this were surly and disingenuous; and it might well be question'd, whether the Man were in his right Wits or no. How nearly the Case I am speaking of approaches to this, any Person may judg. However, what I would remark under this first Head, is, *That these Gentlemen go very far out of the way of the Argument, to find an Occasion to return an unkind Answer, to a kind and friendly Admonition*. And there is certainly much more Reason, why the *Christians* should begin to give them the Caution, than they should give it to the *Christians*; because the latter have been in possession of this Doctrine for so long and uninterrupted a Succession of Ages, and it has all along been inculcated as a first Principle, *That a State of Unbelief is very dangerous*. But the *Hypothesis* these Gentlemen advance, is a modern Fiction, and seems plainly to owe its rise to an Apprehension of the Necessity of having such a kind of Answer as should make some Noise, ready to return to those Persons, who alarm them with a frightful Objection of everlasting Punishments in the next World.

## S E C T. XXXI.

Secondly, **T**HIS Reasoning of theirs is absolutely precarious.

If the Gospel should be an Imposture, you shall be punish'd (say they) for believing it, and for paying a religious Worship to Jesus Christ.

But I would fain know upon what Grounds they adventure to conclude this? They will not pretend to Revelation for it; for such Proof as that is quite out of their way. And if they have no Revelation, we have none that says any such thing.

Again, as they have no Revelation to argue from, so neither can they argue from the Divine Perfections, for the Necessity of such Punishment. Some Sins, they allow, God will graciously forgive: Else what would become of *them*, as well as of *us*? And they believe also, that God Almighty will do it, without any thing of Satisfaction or Atonement to his infinite Justice: for otherwise, their Case were still as bad, as if he would never forgive any Sins at all. Because they declare against all Salvation, by the way of Saviours and Sacrifices for Sin: And they may be sure of this, that if there be a Saviour, he will not make them happy against their Wills.

Now then, since every Sin whatsoever is an infinite Affront to the Perfections of the great Creator; and since these Gentlemen firmly believe, that some Sins shall be pardon'd; and lastly, Since they cannot pretend to be let into the Secrets of the Divine Counsels, to know what Sins will be forgiven, and what will not; 'tis impossible they should



should ever be able justly to draw this peremptory Conclusion, *That the Christians will be obnoxious to the Divine Vengeance upon the score of that Sin, which they here lay to their Charge.*

For they cannot conclude, that it shall be punish'd, either because, and as it is a Sin; or because, and as it is a Sin, of such a particular Kind or Degree: And there is no third Way for them to conclude. They cannot argue the first Way: Because in that case, Punishment must be co-extensive with Sin, and so there would be no room for the Pardon of any. Nor can they argue the second Way: Because they cannot possibly determine what Kinds and Degrees of Sin the infinite Mercies of God will extend to forgive, and what shall be excepted from Pardon. We know that he will make gracious Allowances for the unavoidable Infirmities of his Creatures: And where Men go wrong, not out of Presumption, or wilful affected Ignorance, and neglect of the Means that should enable them to go right, but out of pure Misfortune and Mistake, which 'tis not in their power to free themselves from; in such cases, there's good ground to hope for Favour from those tender Compassions of his, to which all that is kind and good, both in Angels and Men, bears no more Proportion than their Being does to his incomprehensible Essence, which is no Proportion at all. And as the *Deists* can't possibly imagine, *that we design and chuse to be deluded in a matter that so nearly concerns us, as the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection does:* so joining this Consideration with that of the *unbounded Goodness and Mercy of God*, they may find sufficient Reason to forbear that harsh Sentence they pronounce upon us, in case we should find our selves deceiv'd at last.

## S E C T. XXXII.

'TIS natural to conceive, that they will be ready to ask here, *Why it may not as well be suppos'd, that they should be excus'd from Punishment upon the same score, if matters should be otherwise than they now imagine, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ should in the Issue appear to be a Truth?* For it may be alledg'd, *That they are no more willingly mistaken, than we are; and that the infinite Mercy and Goodness of God, may as easily pardon a Delusion on the one side as on the other.* To which, I say, may they have all the Interest in the Favour and Compassion of Heaven, that their own most enlarg'd Desires and Wishes can extend to; and I add, infinitely more!

But they must of necessity allow this, that we can be much surer, upon one *Hypothesis*, how matters will go with them, if they are mistaken, than they can pretend to be, of what will be the Consequence of our Deception! For if the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* be true, then here is a Divine Revelation, which pronounces the Sentence of Unbelievers; so that if these Gentlemen continue in such a State, they may know what their Doom shall be, from the express-Words of the great and awful Judge of Heaven and Earth himself. But on the other side, whether that Doctrine be true or false, there is no Revelation to shew what the *Christians* are to expect at the hands of Divine Justice. The *Deists* indeed say, they shall be punish'd severely; but there is only their Word for it, without any manner of Reason or Authority to support what they say: For I have  
already

already shewn, that the Argument they offer to prove it, will not, nor cannot possibly conclude what they intend. By all the Laws of right Reason in the World, their Conclusion is unjust, and will never follow. And therefore they ought not to make it, unless they resolve to allow themselves to affirm, right or wrong, just what serves their own Turn. So that here's a Certainty of the Event or Consequence, in one *Hypothesis*; and no more than bare Guess and Conjecture in the other. And I hope upon this Account, we may be much more positive in the former Case, than they (without disclaiming all Reason and Modesty) can pretend to be in the latter.

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## S E C T. XXXIII.

**I** Know that these Gentlemen are very apt to entertain themselves with fine Notions of the Mercy and Goodness of God; as if these lovely Attributes were a full and perfect Security against all the Effects of Anger and Displeasure; and that Threatnings are given out for no other purpose, but only to keep Men in awe, and engage them to their Duty: So that even tho the Gospel should prove true at last, yet God, out of his infinite Tenderneſs for his Creatures, would forbear to execute that Vengeance which is there threaten'd to Unbelievers, and reckon it enough to have scar'd them a little in the present World. But it will by no means be safe or prudent for them to trust to such an *Hypothesis* as this. For since they have not been kept in awe, nor been engag'd to the Performance of what will appear to have been their

Duty; I think they have all the Reason in the World to fear, lest the Threatnings should lay hold of them, unless they believe their Maker design'd only to jest and trifle with Mankind, by possessing them with vain and ridiculous Fears, and amusing them with false Prospects of things.

Besides, what business have we with the *secret* Will of God? 'Tis plain, that by arguing upon this, we only wade into a Depth which is infinitely beyond our Fathoming; and where, after all our vain searches, we can find no Bottom to raise any Schemes or *Hypotheses* upon. If God has reveal'd his Mind and Will, we have something to trust to there: And I think, 'tis as unpardonable a Presumption, to fancy he will not do what he has positively said he will do, as 'tis to suppose, that he will do a thousand kind indulgent things in favour of us, which he has never given us the least Encouragement to hope for. We ought to consider him as the just and holy Governor of the World, (and as such, infinitely tender of the Honour of his Government) as well as the gracious Author of our Beings, and the liberal Dispenser of good things to us: And therefore, when he gives Laws to Mankind, and annexes Threatnings (as well as Promises) to enforce the Obedience of them; that he no more design'd to terrify Men by mere imaginary Punishments, than to allure and intice them by the hopes of empty chimerical Rewards. Amongst us Men, Rewards and Punishments are equally necessary to support the Credit and Reputation of a Government. For as the one is needful to give Vertue its due Encouragement, and to engage the Brave and the Good to all those Offices that may be of publick Benefit

Benefit and Service; so is the other as necessary to secure the Laws and Legislator from that Contempt, which the continual Encroachments of unpunish'd (and therefore successful) Vice, would infallibly expose both unto. And tho'tis not to be imagin'd, that the infinite God should be tied up to the Rules and Measures of Creatures; yet we ought to remember, *that nothing is impossible to him, but what involves some real Imperfection.* Now in the nature of the thing, it involves no Imperfection to punish a Sinner. It may be a Perfection to pardon in many Cases, where Punishment is deserv'd; but it can be no Imperfection to inflict Punishment in any Case, where the Sentence of a most righteous and equitable Law (as whatever is enacted by the Divine Authority, must be) pronounces it to be due. And tho it be a much more soft and pleasing Notion of infinite Goodness, to consider it apart from infinite Justice and Holiness, and from all the other Attributes that tend to possess us with Dread and Astonishment; yet all these in God, are but his pure and simple Essence: And if we divide them from one another in our Conceptions, we think no longer of the true and living God, but of some imperfect Idol of our own making. 'Tis no less true of him (and therefore no less to be thought of by us) that he is strict and impartial Justice, as well as boundless and inexhaustible Love.



## S E C T. XXXIV.

Thirdly, **W**HAT the *Deists* object, is so far from being true, that the contrary to it is most apparently true and certain, viz. *That they are vastly more and worse expos'd, if the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection be true; than the Christians can be, upon any Account whatsoever, if that Doctrine be false.*

I here make the hardest Supposition that can be made on the side of the *Christians*, viz. *That if the Gospel be an Imposture, they should be liable to Punishment for believing it.* However, I chuse to argue upon it, that these Gentlemen may see, that whatever Concessions we make, their Condition remains infinitely involv'd and perplex'd; and that they don't rightly consult the Advantage of their own Cause, by giving us an Occasion to enquire so far into these matters.

## S E C T. XXXV.

First, **I**F this Doctrine be true, *These Gentlemen are obnoxious to the Sentence of the Law of Nature, and the Gospel too: And if they suffer, must suffer as Transgressors of both.*

Let them have the slightest Notions possible of the Law of Nature, yet the Gospel establishes the Divine Authority of it, and also makes it a Law specifically distinct; tho it be comprehended, together with the *Evangelical* Law, in that Volume, which makes up the Christian Revelation.

velation. And therefore, if it prove true at last, that our Bible was a divinely inspir'd Book, it will be true also, that this Law of Nature was in full force; and therefore that these Gentlemen were strictly oblig'd to the Practice of all the Duties enjoin'd thereby, and must consequently be answerable to God for the Neglect of the same. But as the Gospel is a Dispensation of a far nobler nature, and teaches so many Doctrines and Duties of the utmost Consequence to the Glory of God, and the Welfare of Mankind; here's a more dismal and terrible Charge to be brought in from hence against these Persons, who instead of receiving it with the Reverence and Humility owing to a Revelation from Heaven, and giving up themselves to a sincere and faithful Obedience to the Precepts of it, have made it all Cheat and Imposture, despis'd the Threatnings, vilify'd the Duties, and turn'd all the Mysteries of it into Jest and Ridicule. Surely if unpardon'd Sins against the Law of Nature will bring down heavy Vengeance upon the Sinner's Head; these Sins of so deep a Dye against the Gospel, will call for sevenfold. If such (whose only Accusation at the Bar of the Supream Judg, is, that they have abus'd the Light of Reason) shall be thought worthy of the Chastisement of Whips; what less than *Scorpions*, sharp Arrows of the Almighty, with Coals of *Juniper*, can they expect, who have shut their Eyes against the brightest Manifestations of God's Will, that they might expose them with more Confidence in the Dark? And if the former Guilt alone will be so exceedingly heavy, what will it be when added to this, which is of so much more heinous and complicated a Nature? When the Sentences of Law and Gospel,  
shall

shall both conspire to condemn a Man to Punishment; such Condemnation must needs be sad, and such Doom intolerable! And tho these Gentlemen have yet time before them to prevent all this, nay and time to render their Conditions truly happy, if they will themselves; yet 'tis necessary to be thus plain and free with them, that they may see in what posture their Matters will stand, upon the *Hypothesis* of the Truth of the Gospel.

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## S E C T. XXXVI.

NOW on the other hand, if the *Christians* be mistaken, and the Gospel be not a Divine Revelation, they can be accountable by no Law, but that of *Nature* only. For tho, if the Gospel were true, they must then stand or fall, according as their Behaviour has been conformable or disconformable to the Tenour thereof; yet if it be a Delusion, 'tis most certain that it will never be made the Rule of Divine Judgment. And therefore, I say, that upon this *Hypothesis* the *Christians* are entirely upon the Foundation of the pure Law of Nature: and the great Enquiry that will proceed at last with respect to them, will be, *how they have discharg'd their Duty with respect to the Injunctions of that Law.* So that the very mistake of receiving the Gospel as a Divine Revelation, when it was not so; and all the Consequences of that Mistake, in the several Rites and Services they have perform'd; together with whatever Guilt they have incur'd by transgressing the Rules of the Gospel, which they erroneously believ'd they were

were indispensably oblig'd to observe: All these will fall under the Cognizance of the Natural Law; not only for the Cause above mention'd, *that the Gospel* (in the present Supposition) *can have nothing at all to do in the trying and judging of Men*; but also, because 'tis what the Law of Nature does properly and immediately consider; in that all depends upon the just Use of a Man's Reason and Understanding, and runs up to this Question at last, *Whether he has behav'd himself as a Creature, endow'd with a Principle of Judgment and Choice, ought to have done.* For when a thing is propos'd as a Revelation from God, it ought to be carefully consider'd and examin'd, whether it carries a stamp of Divine Authority along with it or no, which is not the Work of *Faith*, but of Reason and Thought. And when afterwards a Man's Conscience is convinc'd, and he has actually embrac'd a Doctrine or Dispensation as from Heaven, he is oblig'd (tho thro Ignorance he be mistaken in it) to conform himself to the Rules of it: and he is guilty of an Abuse of his Conscience and Reason, when he does not, as long as the Conviction of his Mind continues; because he subverts the Order that God has establish'd in the reasonable Nature of Man, by offering Violence to a Power set up by God himself, to be a Guide to, and a Guard upon our Actions. So that 'tis as clear as any thing can be, that the *Christians* upon one *Hypothesis*, are accountable only by the Law of Nature; and therefore, have a much less perplex'd and dangerous reckoning to make, than these Gentlemen have, who upon the other *Hypothesis*, must answer whatever Charges are brought in against them, both by *Law* and *Gospel* too.

## S E C T. XXXVII.

Secondly, **T**HERE are some heinous and very aggravating Circumstances attending the Incredulity of the Deists, which are wholly impossible in the Case of the Christians: And therefore the Danger they are expos'd to, is proportionably greater.

They can't but be conscious to themselves of what I mean, since they know well enough, what horrid Work has been made amongst them, with all things that relate to the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. I shall not need to tell them, how far they have presum'd to go in their Remarks, upon the Birth and Life, the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of our Blessed Saviour; the Mission of the Holy Ghost, and the Inspiration of the Apostles, together with all the Miracles wrought to seal the Truth and Divine Authority of the Christian Faith. In some of these Articles I believe, they have out-done the very *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. However, I make no doubt to say, that in *Christian* Countries *Christ* has suffer'd, at least as much as from those that crucify'd him. These indeed nail'd his Body to the Tree; but that direful Action was committed but once, whereas the others repeat the Crime, crucifying him to themselves afresh every Day, and putting him to open shame. The *Mahometans*, who honour him with the venerable Titles of the \* *Word and Power of God*; would not hear, without an Excess of Horror, how he is treated by those who

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\* *Elmacin. Hist. Saracen. C. 7. P. 3. Edit. Ludg. Batav.*



are baptiz'd into his Name. And tho they believe very differently from what we do, yet their own *Prophet* has taught them so much Respect, and so high an Esteem for ours; that should they be witnesses to the Affronts we offer him here, they would be ready to revenge them upon us. This is certain, that the Enemies of *Christ Jesus* must not talk of him to those People at the rate they do to one another. And I think 'tis very hard, that *Turks* and *Arabians*, that *Moors* and other People, upon whom we so freely bestow the Name of Barbarians and Infidels, should need to be call'd in for Monitors, to teach Men (that call themselves *Christians*) good Manners in such a Case as this.

Now these Gentlemen should consider, *That if they happen to be in the Wrong, here's all this, over and above the grand Mistake, to be accounted for.* It is not only the bare Deception, that will be laid to their Charge; that is, taking the Gospel for an Imposture, when it was indeed a Divine Revelation, and believing *Christ Jesus* to be a Deceiver, when he was in reality the Saviour of Mankind: But besides that, there's the Spleen and Malignity of their Unbelief, the virulent Satyr and Reproach with which they have persecuted his Name and Character, and blasted the Religion he has establish'd in the World. They have not been contented to deny the Divine Authority of the Gospel themselves, but have propagated their Prejudices in the most invidious and disgraceful manner, made Parties to flout and scoff at *Christianity*, and open'd as many *Mouths* to rail at the Author of it, as they possibly could. Now this is flagrant, beyond all possibility of Excuse. Men may be Enemies to an Opinion, without Rancour and laborious Malice;

Malice; and an Error is prodigiously heightned, by being accompany'd with such Circumstances as these. But on the other hand, if we suppose the *Christians* to be deluded in this grand Point, there's nothing of this black and heinous Nature in their Mistake. It consists in a wrong-plac'd Zeal and Devotion, but 'tis infinitely remote from all evil Affections. Such Aggravations as Insult and Defiance of Heaven, are utterly incompatible with it. If the Doctrine of *Christ's Resurrection* be false, the *Christians* have paid Divine Honours where they were not due; and if the Doctrine of *Christ's Resurrection* be true, have not these Gentlemen refus'd to pay them where they were due? If the former be Idolatry, what sort of Name must we give the latter? Is it less than Sacrilege to rob God of his Honour? Is it short of Blasphemy, to make his Son and Messenger an Impostor? Now suppose these Charges on each side to ballance one another; yet there are dismal Circumstances on the part of the *Deists*, which will infallibly turn the Scale. Let mistaken *Blasphemy* be oppos'd to mistaken *Idolatry*; yet the endless Catalogue of Outrages and Affronts, which comes in with the former, and is impossible in the latter Case, does, I think, make the scores very far from being equal on both sides. In short, their Sin is of a terrible Complexion, and fearfully aggravated; which can never be said with any Truth of the Crime which they object to the *Christians*.

And therefore they must pardon us, if we insist upon it; *That for this very Reason, the Consequences of their Deception, must needs be incomparably more dangerous and fatal, than those of ours.*

## S E C T. XXXVIII.

**B**ESIDE all this, 'tis to be consider'd too, That *the Christians* (upon the *Hypothesis* that they are deceiv'd) *have never made any Advantage by their Mistake, with respect to the present World; but instead of gaining more Pleasure and Liberty, have expos'd themselves to incomparably greater Sufferings, and endur'd more ungrateful Confinements than any other sort of Men.* But *Matters* are quite otherwise with the *Deists*; for they *make their Belief that the Gospel is an Imposture, turn to a very good Account, and serve them to many useful Purposes in the present Life:* And this makes their Case much less compassionate, if the Gospel should prove to be a Divine Revelation, than that of the *Christians*, if it should be an Imposture. For those that have been miserable under a Mistake, are vastly greater Objects of Pity, than those who have made use of that Error, to enjoy a World of Pleasures, which without it they could never have done.

## S E C T. XXXIX.

**B**UT to conclude, the great Point that should employ our best Thoughts and Cares on both sides, is, *Who have the most solid and rational Grounds to support the Belief they adhere to; whether they who take this Doctrine for a Delusion, or we who receive it as a Divine Truth?* For this Rule must be laid down as a thing of the  
utmost

utmost Consequence both to them and to us, viz. that by the eternal Laws of Justice and right Reason, which the Author of all things (who is absolute essential Reason and Justice) will observe in dealing with all his Creatures, the Punishments inflicted on Men, for their bad Conduct in the Matters of their Salvation, will be proportion'd to their want of Care and Diligence to inform themselves aright, and to argue rationally upon those Informations. And therefore, that those Persons are certain to fare the worst, who have examin'd things the least, made the least obvious and natural Deductions from them; and who have gone the farthest out of the way, of all the Methods of Reasoning universally receiv'd amongst Mankind; either to believe what they ought not to have believ'd, or to make themselves Unbelievers, in a Case where their Faith was requir'd.

From whence we'll draw this *Coroll.* *That if the Christians have a more fair and rational Plea to make at last, before the Divine Tribunal, for their Belief of the Resurrection of Christ (supposing it to be a Fiction) than the Deists can make for their Infidelity, (supposing the Resurrection to be a real Truth) Then these Gentlemen will be more sadly expos'd if the Resurrection of Christ be a Truth, than the Christians can be if it prove to be otherwise.*

Therefore, what remains for them to do, is, to enquire with all possible Care, into the Grounds of their Denial of this so important a Point; the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*: And, comparing those Reasons with the others, upon which the *Christians* are persuaded to believe it, to see whether they don't deviate vastly more, from all the Methods of Reasoning universally approv'd

prov'd and establish'd among Men, by their Denial, than the *Christians* do by their Assent: For if they do, their Danger is as much greater, as the Irrationality of their Proceeding is more. And if the *Christians* in believing this Doctrine, are found to argue upon those *sure Principles*, which the unprejudic'd Reason of Mankind, and the Laws of the World we live in, do both conspire to justify; then since those Gentlemen cannot possibly proceed upon the same Principles, to disbelieve it, 'tis plain, that they are most desperately expos'd, as long as they continue in their Unbelief. Let them therefore bring this matter that I propose to a fair Trial, and do it with infinitely more Zeal and Application, than they would search after any Truth in *Philosophy*, from the Discovery of which, they could expect the greatest Glory, and the Applause of all the learned World. And I hope the following Discourse may be of some use, to help them to make this great Experiment without Prejudice; and as becomes Men, who have only Truth in view, and believe it is a Matter of some Importance, to find it out in the present Case.

*The End of the First Part.*







## Part the Second,

*Containing the General Principles, on which the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection is establish'd.*

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### C O N T E N T S.

*The Nature of an Evidence, which is Obligatory to Human Understanding, stated and demonstrated.*

*Concerning Moral Evidence and Certainty.*

*The Differences between this and Mathematical Certainty.*

*The Obligatory Nature of Moral Proofs.*

*The absurd and intolerable Consequences, that follow upon the taking away, or disowning such Evidence.*

SECT.

## S E C T. I.



HAVING hitherto prepar'd the way to our great Design, by some short Discourses on such Heads, as seem'd fit to possess both *Christians* and *Deists*, with a just Sense of the Importance of the Matter in Dispute: I shall now proceed to shew these Gentlemen, what Principle I intend to make use of, in order to evince to them, the unquestionable Certainty of the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

And this Principle, in general is, *The Evidence afforded for it, from whence the Truth of this Doctrine may be fairly and justly infer'd.*

And therefore in the first Place, I argue thus, *That there is such an Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as actually induces an Obligation on all Men* (to whom that Evidence is fairly propos'd, and who are capable of arguing upon it, after a due and regular manner) *to give their Assent to it as a certain Truth.* Having laid down this Proposition, my next Step is to the Consideration of the infinite Perfections of the great *Author and Governour of the Universe*; which these Gentlemen (by their Principles) are no less forward to own and adore, than the *Christians* themselves are.

And here I must advance this Proposition, *That 'tis utterly impossible, that the Supreme Governour of the World* (whose just and wise Providence presides over all things, and more especially over the Affairs and Concerns of reasonable Beings) *should ever countenance a notorious Falshood, with*

*such an Evidence, as should lay an indispensable Obligation on rational Creatures, to give their Assent to it, as a real Truth.*

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## S E C T. II.

**N**OW from both these together, we shall be able to infer the main Conclusion, with all the Force and Perspicuity that can be. For if there be *such an Evidence*, for the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*; and if the Perfections of God Almighty will not suffer or allow, that a Delusion should be recommended to the World with *such an Evidence*: It will fairly follow, *That this Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection, is not a Delusion, but a certain Truth*; or that it was undoubted Matter of Fact, *that he did rise from the Dead*. For if it had not been Matter of Fact, it had been impossible, that a Being of infinite Truth, Justice and Goodness (such as the *Deists* tell us they believe God to be) should ever have suffer'd it to pass amongst Men, with *such an Evidence*, as by all the Laws of Human Nature, and the World wherein we live, *should lay an indispensable Obligation on every capable Subject (to whom this Doctrine is represented, with its proper Evidences) to receive it as a certain Truth.*

This is the Scheme I intend to proceed upon, and the Consequence of it will be this; That if I produce solid and truly rational Proof, for the Propositions I have laid down, these Gentlemen will be oblig'd, either at once to throw off all Natural Religion, and rank themselves among those Unbelievers of the lowest Form, who deny the Being and Perfections of a God;  
or

or else by granting these Propositions, to grant the Conclusion likewise, and so admitting the Truth of this Doctrine, give us an Occasion of rejoicing with them, upon the score of the happy Change of their Minds.

To set this Argument therefore in a clear and convincing Light, these four things must be distinctly done.

First, *To shew what is meant by such an Evidence, as does infallibly oblige every capable Subject to whom it is justly and duly represented, to receive a thing as Truth and Matter of Fact, for the Proof of which, such Evidence is alledg'd.*

Secondly, *To demonstrate, that an Evidence so qualify'd, as I shall now explain, and represented in such manner, and to such a Subject, as I have already suppos'd; does actually oblige, to a full and firm Belief of a thing propos'd, as real Truth and Matter of Fact.*

Thirdly, *That 'tis impossible the Divine Providence should ever countenance an Imposture (or which is the same thing, permit or suffer it to be countenanc'd) with an Evidence of such a Nature as this.*

Fourthly, *That there is actually such an Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as does fully come up to all the Characters and Conditions of an Evidence, which directly obliges Human Understanding to yield its Assent.* I shall allot this Second Part of this Treatise, to the three first of these Heads; and bestow the third entirely, upon the fourth and last of them.

## S E C T. III.

FOR the *First*, The Evidence I here intend, may be thus describ'd.

'Tis such, as being impartially weigh'd and consider'd, by the free Use of a Man's Reason, in all the common and allow'd ways of using it; does not only more powerfully persuade him to a Belief of the Thing propos'd, than any Objections to the contrary, when duly stated and set in a fair Light, can dissuade him from the Belief of that thing; but also such, which if a Man should disown and reject, he must necessarily be forc'd upon such sort of Consequences, as the genuine and disinterested Sense of Mankind would condemn as Absurd and Wrong; and which even the Person himself concern'd (without making use of some bad Arts, by which his Understanding may be suppos'd to be manag'd, contrary to its native Tendency) would not be able to digest, when he came to examine and reflect upon them, in a cool and well-dispos'd Temper. So that upon a just and cautious ballancing of the *Momenta* on both sides, viz. The *Force of the Evidence*, and that of the *Objections*; a Man finds the former sufficient to furnish all those Reasons for the Assent of his Mind, that the Nature and Conditions of the Case propos'd will admit of; and that the latter are not sufficient to take off or invalidate ought of those Reasons: and that therefore, in a fair and regular way of Proceeding, without Sophistry, Prejudice, or any unnatural straining for a Conclusion, he may proceed to conclude matters



#### Sect. 4. *Evidence which obliges, &c.* 87

matters to be in reality, according as the Evidence propounded does represent them to be.

In a word, Whatsoever Evidence in any Case, affords all those Media, which are necessary to make a perspicuous natural Conclusion, and to solve whatever Difficulties occur, upon such Principles as (in all resembling Cases) Mankind universally agree, to argue themselves into a just Assurance and Satisfaction by : Such an Evidence, I say, does actually oblige every Person, who is duly inform'd of the Nature of it, and is capable of arguing in a just and regular manner thereupon ; to assent to the thing propos'd, as real Truth and Matter of Fact.

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### S E C T. IV.

**A**S to the Evidence I have here describ'd, there are these things to be observ'd concerning it.

First, *That this is not the Evidence which accompanies strict and perfect Demonstration ; as Demonstration is understood by the Logicians or Mathematicians.* For tho all accurate Demonstration must necessarily have such Properties as these ; yet every kind of Proof that has these Properties, is not accurate Demonstration : Because compleat Demonstration does in its own Nature, involve and require some peculiar Conditions, which can by no means agree to some other sorts of Proof, which yet may come up to all those Conditions, that the Evidence I have describ'd does comprehend.

## S E C T. V.

Secondly, **A**ND therefore, an Evidence of this Nature does not force or extort the Assent of the Understanding, as that of rigid Demonstration does.

How the Mind is influenc'd by Demonstration, and how by other sort of Proof; I shall discourse more at large by and by: In the mean time, this must be laid down as an undoubted Rule, *That some Proofs may oblige us to yield the Assent of our Understandings, which yet do not extort that Assent from us; or (speaking in the common Sense of the Philosophers) inevitably compel us to yield it.* Every one will know what sort of Compulsion it is that I do, and must intend here: *It is such as the Understanding suffers, when a just and accurate Demonstration is propounded to it.* The Power of such Proof as this is plainly irresistible. It will not suffer the Mind to remain in doubt or suspense, but with a superior Authority exacts its assent, and reduces it to a Compliance. Instead of exerting a contrary Act of Dissent, we cannot abide indifferent in such a case as this; but yield we must, even tho it be ever so contrary to our Inclinations. The Reason of this is, from the *specific Nature* of those sort of Proofs we call Demonstrations; which proceeding from such Principles as are most deeply radicated in our Minds, and perfectly congenial with them, they assault us with something drawn from the inmost Recesses of our own Constitution, and so make their way into us with infinite Speed and Facility.

Other

Other Proofs there are, whose Principles, tho strictly congruous and futable to our rational Natures, yet are not so near a-kin to them as the former; and therefore do not insinuate themselves into us with that wonderful Ease and Advantage, that those of strict Demonstration do. From whence it comes to pass, that there is more scope left us to argue and enquire about them; to examine the Congruity and just Connection of the Premises one with another, and their Tendency to infer a convincing legitimate Conclusion: which Disquisition is incomparably abridg'd, and even almost quite prevented, in the Case of rigid Demonstration, by the naturalness of the Principles, and the bright easy way of disposing and linking them with one another. However, these other Proofs (I will not say may persuade, for that is not the Case, but) may peremptorily oblige the Assent of our Minds; tho they do not command it in that magisterial way, that scientific or demonstrative Ones do. For they may present Truth to us, by such a concatenation of Steps and Consequences, as may render it absolutely Just and Rational for us to acknowledg and receive it as such; tho the Process be different from those, which are form'd by the strict Rules of Logick or Mathematicks. And if they may do this, they may oblige: For we are under an *eternal Obligation* to act justly and rationally.

I have hitherto shewn (in these two Particulars) what is not intended or asserted in the Evidence mention'd.

To shew therefore what I do intend by it; I say,

## S E C T. VI.

Thirdly, **T**HAT which I have describ'd, is such an Evidence in general, as obliges the Understanding of a reasonable Creature to yield its assent, in all Cases where we have not the Testimony of Sense or rigorous Demonstration, to convince us of the truth of things.

And I say farther, that no sort of Evidence below or short of this, is sufficient to engage the Assent of our Minds; has Force or Authority enough to challenge us as rational Creatures, to receive that as Truth, for the Proof of which, such Evidence is alledg'd. An Evidence of an inferior Character may represent things so far plausible and credible, as to be a sufficient ground for us to proceed upon in ordinary Cases; but it does not lay an *Obligation*, or make it strictly just and necessary for us to yield the Assent of our Understandings, and receive those things as positively true and real. Because no Considerations can be sufficient grounds for the entire Acquiescency and Repose of our Minds, in any thing as Truth; but such as are plain and perspicuous, will hold firm and good under all Examinations, and are no way liable to solid rational Exceptions.



## S E C T. VII.

I Shall now in the second Place, demonstrate the obligatory Nature of an Evidence which is thus qualify'd, or which comes up to these Conditions. And this I shall do, from these *two general Considerations*, viz. *The Constitution of Human Nature*; and *the strict Obligations we lie under, to own or submit to moral Proof and Evidence*. These Topicks will abundantly furnish us with matter, to conclude the indispensable Obligation such an Evidence lays on Mankind.

I shall begin the Argument from the first of these Considerations, namely, *The Frame and Constitution of Human Nature*. And that I may do this with more advantage, it will not be amiss to divide the Work into these three Branches.

*First*, I shall shew, that the infinitely perfect and glorious Author of our Beings, must needs have establish'd a certain Law or Order, in the reasonable Nature of Man, with respect to the Acts and Operations of his Mind; according to which he should be oblig'd to exert his Faculties upon proper Motives and Inducements, when presented to him. That he would not fail, in our very Creation, to make suitable Impressions upon our Natures for that End and Purpose; and consequently not leave us to acquire Dispositions and Inclinations, to act as intelligent Creatures should do; merely from Art and Education, from Custom and Practice, or the Examples of others.

*Secondly*, That Human Nature is however so made and constituted, that it is in our Power to  
invert



*invert that Order, or to proceed contrary to the Obligation of that Law, which God has establish'd in us.*

Thirdly, *I shall evince, that it is apparently agreeable to that Order, which God has establish'd in the reasonable Nature of Man; and that it must of necessity be according to his original Intent and Design (in giving us such a Power, as that we call Understanding) that we should yield the Assent thereof, or receive things as true, upon such an Evidence as I have already describ'd.*

And from hence it will be an unavoidable Consequence, that an Evidence of this Nature, whenever propounded to us, ought not to leave us hesitant and indifferent; but (as it does, in the Nature of Things oblige us) so it should fully determine us, actually to yield our Assent.

## S E C T. VIII.

**I** Begin with the first of these *Propositions*, which being the Foundation on which the present Argument is built, requires that we bestow some particular Care and Application upon the proof of it.

Whether it be what the *Deists* would solemnly and positively deny or no (at least *all* of them) I will neither affirm, nor am I concern'd to know. I am sure 'tis of great Importance to me, and (how plain soever it may appear) it is not self-evident; and these are sufficient grounds to justify a formal Proof of it. Besides, 'tis a common practice with some People, to be as ready to deny, whatever is not made manifestly absurd for them to deny; as to disclaim all doubt about it, when once they see it so well prov'd,

prov'd, that it must be ridiculous for them to do so. In order to the clearing this Point therefore, I shall offer the following Considerations.

First, *It casts an Imputation of downright Folly and Imprudence, or of Weakness and Impotence on God, to suppose him to make any sort of Being so, as to be unfit to answer what must be his End in creating such a Being, if we allow him to have any End at all therein.*

For what End and Purpose (for example) is such a Creature, as what we call a rational one, made? Every one must grant, *that it was to act Rationally and Intelligently, as a Creature of such a Rank and Order ought to do.* But for any Being to act without proper Qualifications for Action, is a contradiction. And Principles of Action, are indispensably necessary Qualifications for it. And original Dispositions or Inclinations to act, are the certain and undoubted Principles of Action. If so; then I ask in the next place, *Would the Author of Nature have obtain'd the proper and direct End of creating such a Creature as Man, by giving him a bare rational Capacity, and sending him into the World, wholly unfurnish'd of all those determinate Principles of Action, which belong to him (not as an Animal only, but) as an intelligent Creature?* No: but he would have left the most beautiful and excellent part of his Work undone: Because *Being or Capacity, fitted to display it self by suitable Acts and Operations, includes something infinitely more Noble, than still inactive Being or Capacity without it.* Add to this, *That all wise Agents do not only propose a certain Scope and Design to themselves, in what they do, but intend also to render the Effects of their Skill, actually useful and serviceable for something; by putting them out of their Hands, in such*

a Condition, that that Usefulness may discover it self. And will he who is perfect in Wisdom, do less? A rational Nature, undispos'd, unfitted to exert and display it self in a course of futable Operations, is an imperfect unaccountable Something: 'Tis not a finish'd Creature, but the Outlines or rude Draught of one. 'Tis such an Embryo, as could never come out of the Hands of that God, who is wise in Heart, and wonderful in Counsel; who leaves none of his Works for our after-polishing and correcting; but makes them all at first, worthy of our highest Praise and Admiration. But this leads me to consider,

## S E C T. IX.

Secondly, **T**HAT 'tis a farther particular Reflection upon the infinite Perfections of God, to suppose that he has left us to acquire Dispositions and Inclinations to act as intelligent Creatures should do; by such uncertain despicable, and precarious Means, as Education, Custom, and the Examples of others here in the World.

For at this rate, 'tis not God, but we that make up the Man. He only furnishes a proper Substance, but (according to this *Hypothesis*) leaves it intirely to our disposal, to infuse Principles into it, and dress it up for a rational Agent, as we shall think fit. That which renders our Nature truly noble and lovely, is its exerting it self in so many fine and wonderful ways of Operation. The various Acts of the Understanding about *Truth*, the Efforts and Tendências of the Will to *Good*; how excellent are they, and how  
admi-

admirably fitted to the End of making us easy and happy? And can our Teaching, or all the Examples we give, mould Human Nature into so beautiful a Frame; shew the Mind how to argue and conclude, and direct the other Powers to their several Objects? 'Tis the highest degree of Impiety and Presumption, to imagine, *that any such Work as this was ever intended, for our Art and Industry to perform.* And besides, if we consider the Folly and Weakness, the Rashness and Precipitancy, the Partiality and ill Management, that has all along prevail'd amongst Mankind; we shall easily be induc'd to conclude, without any more ado, *that God never design'd to leave us in one anothers Hands.* To adorn and furnish out a reasonable Creature, who is to glorify his Maker, and bear a useful part in the Employments of Life, by the means of those Qualifications; is an Office of too much Importance ever to be committed to Parents, Nurses, and School-masters, or any other inferior Managers of Human Nature.

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## S E C T. X.

Thirdly, 'TIS farther to be consider'd, *That this Hypothesis quite takes away the moral Government of God, and supposes him to rule Men by no other Laws, than those by which he commands the Brutal or Inanimate part of the Creation.* For if he that is the Author of our Nature, does not make such Impressions on it, as should dispose and prompt us to a sutable and regular Behaviour of our selves; we cannot be imagin'd either to please or displease him by  
any



any sort of Actions that we perform, let them be what they will. Because (by this *Hypothesis*) all the Inclinations and Dispositions which belong to us, as intelligent Creatures, are the mere result of the *Management and Institution*, we have had from our Fellow-Creatures about us. What they please to put into us, we take, and we act accordingly. If they set us right, and we do ever so well, there is no Obedience to God in the Case; for we do but as we were taught, and because we were taught to do so by them. If on the other hand, we act ever so wrong, we break no Laws of God, we go contrary to no Manifestations of the Will of our Creator; and therefore, we can no more justly incur his Displeasure by this means, having no Orders nor Injunctions from him to observe; than we can please and honour him, by that mechanical Regularity of Action, which we derive merely from the Authority or the Impulses of other Men: For if no Law, then no Transgression on the one hand, as well as no Obedience on the other. We are not capable either of Vertue or Vice; and therefore neither of receiving any Moral Good or Evil, at the Hands of our Creator. We ought never to suppose, that God either rewards or punishes, in the present Life: That the most signal Blessings bestow'd on us are Favours, or the most direful Calamities, Expressions of his Wrath and Indignation. We should conclude, that he is neither pleas'd or displeas'd, when any of these things happen to the World; but that as we are perfectly indifferent to him, so is he to us; never concerning himself about any of our Actions or Affairs, nor caring how things go on, whether well or ill, here below.

And



And thus God Almighty is fairly excluded, from all Interest in the Government of the Rational (and therefore the most Excellent) part of the Creation; or at least made to administer it with respect to Men, just as to the viler Animals, or even insensible Bodies themselves. These are all of them subject to his general Dominion and Providence, and so are we, and that is all. Such a Scheme would be much more tolerable in a profess'd \* *Epicurean*; than in Men, who may pretend, by the advantage of wonderful modern Discoveries, to demonstrate the Being and Perfections of a God, after another sort of manner, than any of the antient *Philosophers* ever could do.

I shall only say this, that if the *Deists* can fancy a Divinity to themselves, capable of acting after this imprudent fantastical manner, they are at liberty to do what they please; but I declare for my own part, that I should never think him worthy of my Service and Adoration: Nor are they the Men they would pass for in the World, if they have such despicable Notions of God as these are; since 'tis strictly demonstrable, from the necessary Attributes of his Nature, that he cannot be such a one, as this horrid *Hypothesis* represents him to be.

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\* Omnis enim per se Divûm Natura necesse est  
Immortali Ævo summâ cum Pace fruatur,  
Semota a rebus nostris, sejunctaque longè,  
Nam privata Dolore omni, privata Periclis  
Ipsa suis pollens Opibus, nihil indiga nostri,  
Nec bene Promeritis capitur, nec tangitur Irâ.

*Lucret. Lib. 1.*

Quod beatum est, & immortale, id nec habet negotium,  
nec exhibet cuiquam. *Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. 1.*

## S E C T. XI.

Fourthly, I Shall conclude this *Head*, with a Question concerning the *First Man*, which I must desire these Gentlemen to resolve; and if I mistake not, let them answer which way they will, they'll find some perplex'd Consequences attending the Solution they shall think fit to offer us. In proposing this Question, I take it for granted, that they believe there was a *First Man*; or that the *World* has not gone on at this rate, in a Succession of Fathers and Sons, from all Eternity. For otherwise, they are not the Persons I am (in this Discourse) concern'd withal. And besides, this is not a Point of pure *Christian Theology*; for if it were, I would not impose it upon them, without particular Proof. It is not only *Moses's* Doctrine, but that of the \* *Poets* too; and this Authority, I hope, is sufficient to put

\* *Præterea si nulla fuit Genitalis Origo  
Terrarū & Cœli, semperque Æterna fuere, &c.*  
Lucret. Lib. 5.

——— *Ut his Exordia Primis  
Omnia, & ipse tener Mundi concreverit Orbis.*  
Virg. Eclog. 6.

*Cum prorepserunt Primis Animalia Terris,  
Mutum & turpe Pecus, &c.* Horat. Lib. 1. Sat. 3.  
*Ante Mare & Terras, & (quod tegit omnia) Cælum,  
Unus erat Toto Naturæ Vultus in Orbe,  
Quem dixere Chaos*——— &c. Ovid. Metam. Lib. 1.

*Ἦτοι μὲν πρώτισται Χάος ἦνεν, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα  
Γαῖα εὐρύστερνος, &c.* Hesiod. Theogon.  
*Ἐν αὖ Γαίαν ἔταδ' ἔνδ' ἕρπον, ἐν δὲ θαλάσσαν,  
Ἡελίον τ' ἀρχαίμαντα, σελήνην τε πλῆθεσαν.*

Homer. Iliad. 18.

—Μῦθον

put it out of all doubt with them: Tho I must add, *That all that the Poets say upon this Head, as well as several others that make a very beautiful Figure in their Compositions, are plain Transcriptions from Moses, the most antient Historian in the Universe. And this Justin Martyr has perspicuously made out; and in the same Discourse as plainly asserted and prov'd (to his Countrymen the Greeks) the \* Antiquity of the Mosaick Writings, before those of all their own Historians, Poets, Philosophers, or Legislators whatsoever.*

However, to pass by these things at present, I am concern'd only in the supposition of some *First Man*; not caring in what manner, or how long ago he was created, or what his Name was: tho Justin refers the *Greeks* to one of their own † *Oracles*, which call'd him by the Name of *Adam*, as *Moses* had done long before.

Now the Question I would propose here, is, *Whether this first Parent of Mankind was created with Dispositions and Inclinations to exert his Facul-*

Μένον δ' ἐσόμεν κόσμῳ ἀνακλῖ·

Ἐἰς ἕς, ἀνίστημι, ἐνδὲς ἔκρυσ· πάντα τέτυκται,  
Orph. apud Just. de Monar. P. 156.

Ἐἰς ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν, εἷς ἐστὶν Θεός,

Ὅς ἐξανδὸν τέτρωκε, καὶ Γαίαν μακρὴν, &c. Sophoc.  
uti apud Justin. in Cohor. ad Græcos. P. 83. Et  
de Monarch. P. 154.

\* — "Ἴνα γνῶτε ὅτι πάντων ἡ παρ' ὑμῖν, ἢ τε σοφῶν,  
ἢ τε ποιητῶν, ἢ τε ἰστοριογράφων, ἢ φιλοσόφων, ἢ νομοθετῶν,  
πολλῶν προσβύταλ' ἔχοντες, ὁ παρ' ὧν ἡ θεοσεβεία διδάσ-  
καλ' ἡμῶν Μωϋσῆς γεννῶς, ὡς δεῖσιν ἡμῖν αἱ ἡ Ελ-  
λῶν ἰστοίαι. Justin. Mart. Cohort. ad Græcos. Pag. 62.  
Edit. Oxon.

† "Ὅν παρ' ὧν πλάσας μερόπων, Ἀδάμ δὲ καλέσας. Justin.  
Ibid.

ties, as an intelligent Creature ought to do, upon proper Motives and Inducements; or whether he was not? That is in other words, Whether a certain determinate Law, was impress'd on his reasonable Nature, for this End or Purpose, by his Creator, or no?

If it be said, that there was not: I must ask then, how did he come to obtain Principles and Dispositions, proper for a Rational Nature to act and govern it self by? There are but these three ways possible in the very Nature of the thing, either ordinary Teaching and Tradition; extraordinary Infusion by God; or the Influence of External Objects: I mean the various Works of God in the visible Creation, presenting themselves to the Senses, and giving Occasion to the Mind to exert it self, and by that means to fix such a Bias or Tendency to Action in Human Nature, as we call an original impress'd or congenial Law.

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## S E C T. XII.

NOW the first of these Methods, could not possibly take place here.

The second, impeaches the Divine Wisdom and Prudence.

And the third, amounts to a plain begging of the Question.

First, 'Tis plain, that the first of these Methods could never take place in this Case. For we are speaking of the first Man; in which case, Parents and Nurses, and all other Human Instructors, are totally excluded. And we cannot imagine, that the venerable Head of our Race

Race should be sent to the *Birds, Beasts and Fishes*, to know how to use his own Understanding, and learn the Deportment fit for a reasonable Creature.

*Secondly*, To create a bare Rational Nature first, and then to impart those necessary Principles of Action afterwards, by *extraordinary Infusion*; is going so far about, to do what was simply necessary to be done, and might have been done by an infinitely wise and powerful Agent, with as much Facility, at the very first Formation of a Creature: I say, 'tis taking such a Compass, and is such an indirect unaccurate sort of proceeding; that we cannot make our selves so guilty, as to ascribe it to God, who cannot but know and chuse the most perfect and lovely ways of working, in all that he does. And surely, to accomplish noble Ends by the most compendious Methods of Operation, is in the very Nature of the thing, a principal Perfection. 'Tis infinitely more concise and beautiful (and therefore more worthy of God) to set out a Creature, finish'd and compleat at first; than to make a Mass of Being, to be tun'd and dispos'd to proper Modes of Action, by some after Effects of Divine Skill and Omnipotence.

## S E C T. XIII.

*Thirdly*, I Say, that to suppose, *these Principles were acquir'd or contracted, by Contemplation of the Works of God in the visible Creation; is manifestly to take the grand Point in Dispute for granted.* The reason is, because it supposes that Law in Human Nature (which I speak of) to



be already fix'd and settled. For what is Contemplation, that includes no kind of Argumentation or Reflection? And where Argument and Reflection are; must there not be a Law establish'd, by virtue of which a Creature who contemplates (and in that Contemplation argues and reflects) should be inclin'd or prompted to argue and reflect in that manner, upon such external Motives and Appearances? Of what use would ten thousand Worlds of Objects be to an intelligent Creature, or a Being of a Rational Nature, which yet were purely passive, and void of all Dispositions to exert that Nature, after a proper and suitable manner? Tho Objects can impress the outward Organs, they can't work themselves into the Substance of the Thinking Power (whatever it be) and create Efforts and Tendencies therein, to act after this or that manner, or to draw these Conclusions rather than others; if such Principles of Operation were not there before.

And this is true to a Demonstration, whatever we make the Human Mind to be; whether an immaterial Substance, or else a mere System of Matter.

## S E C T. XIV.

**F**OR suppose the Mind (first of all) to be a Substance quite distinct from Matter, or of another kind of Essence, than those Beings we call Bodies, are of.

Then, I hope, it will be allow'd, that the Action of External Matter (that is, *Objects*) upon the *Incorporeal Sensories*, cannot possibly produce

Sect. 14. *Evidence which obliges, &c.* 103

duce in the *Incorporeal Mind*, such sort of *Phenomena* as those are, which we call by the name of *Inclinations and Dispositions*, to remember, think, and judg after this or that particular manner. For how should the Impulses of Matter be receiv'd, where no Matter is; or what effect should they produce, upon a Being so infinitely Heterogeneous to Matter?

Suppose (in the second place) *the Mind to be a mere System of Matter; and Thought to be nothing else but the Revolutions or Agitations of some finer Particles thereof.* When the Organs of the Senses are struck by some Motions propagated from Objects abroad; we will suppose the Motions or Vibrations excited there, to be likewise continued to the Parts within. So that whether by the means of the *Liquidum Nervorum* (contain'd in the Canals dispers'd up and down the Machine) or by any other corporeal Medium or Instrument whatsoever; the Impulse at last reaches that Orb, Vortex, or System of Matter, in the Motions of which, Thought doth peculiarly consist. Here then we have Thought produc'd. This Object (be it what it will) has set the Particles a moving, and this Motion (I'll suppose) is my actual Cogitation or Knowledg of this Object.

But now Experience farther assures me, *that this Cogitation of such an Object, is the occasion of my making some Inferences or Conclusions therefrom; and all Conclusions are Propositions really distinct from the Premises which beget them.*

Therefore, the first Motions of actual Thought must generate other Motions really distinct from themselves. For what rate of distinction there is between Premises and Conclusion, the same must of necessity be, between the Species of Motion which form Premises, and those which ge-

nerate Conclusions. But the Parts of Matter, moving according to any possible determination, *cannot change their Directions, but by the Impulse of some External Force.* And therefore it is necessary, that we have some foreign Impulse to change their Direction in this case, that so we may have a distinct sort of Motion generated, that may produce a Conclusion.

Now this external Mover in the present Case, is either the first Object which struck the Senses, or some other different from it.

If it be the first, then it will produce the very same Agitations as before, and consequently there will be no different Motion generated to form a *Conclusion*. If it be another Object; how should that ever produce a Motion, which should be the occasion of my making some Inference concerning the first Object, which is totally different from it? How should the Vibrations excited by an Horse, lead me naturally to think of a Fleet of Ships; or some creeping Plant, to run into a Conclusion about the Properties of the fixed Stars?

So that then upon this *Hypothesis*, it were impossible ever to draw any Conclusions from External Appearances, or to infer one thing from another. And yet Experience shews me, that I am able to do this. As for Example:

I think a double Inference follows from this present Discourse, about the Operations of the Human Mind, *viz. That we are not compos'd of mere Matter and Motion; and that if we were, there yet would be something more than the bare Presence and Action of external Objects, requir'd to effect a proper Bias or Tendency in our Faculties, to exert themselves conformably thereto.* For by what has been said, 'tis demonstrable, that it can never be  
done

done by mere Matter and Motion, or blind Mechanical Impulse.

So that now I say, to argue at this rate, is plainly to beg the Question, and to take the great thing in Dispute for granted.

From hence it follows, *That in the Case of the First Man, an original impress'd Law must necessarily be allow'd.*

Now I say, if it were necessary and fit he should be made so, why should not the same reasons hold with respect to us? We have all the need of such an Institution that he could possibly have, and more; as being otherwise entirely at the Mercy of our Fellow-Creatures, who are most of them but poorly qualify'd to impart Principles of Understanding, and give Laws for rational Beings, to govern themselves by. It is beyond all things Absurd and Precarious, to suppose, that the *First Man* alone should be thus happily qualify'd by his Maker; and all the rest of his Offspring, created under such very despicable and miserable Circumstances.

And from these Considerations, I hope, the truth of the *first Proposition* may be fully evinc'd, to all, who have any such Notions of God, as will not suffer them to charge him with those imprudent and indecent ways of Proceeding, which we should be asham'd to be charg'd with our selves.

## S E C T. XV.

THE second thing propos'd, was to shew,  
*That tho a certain Law be establish'd by God,*  
*in our reasonable Natures, 'tis in our power not-*  
*with-*

*withstanding to act contrary to the Tenor thereof, or to exert our Minds after quite another manner, than that Law obliges us to.*

And this we shall presently find to be true, by reflecting but a little upon our own Constitution. Tho God has made us intelligent rational Beings, he has not made it essential to us to act rationally, and as we ought to do. He has not created us under a Mechanical Necessity, of conforming our selves perpetually to that wise Order, which is prescrib'd to us in the Frame of our reasonable Nature: Nor are we compel'd thereto, by any predetermining Force or Influence from him, as the Supreme Author and Agent of the Universe. To take this aright, we must consider, that besides *Understanding*, or a Power of Knowing, Arguing, and Reflecting upon things; God has endow'd us with another, which is of a very different Nature; and so adapted, as to be either extremely Beneficial, or Harmful to us, according to the Use we make of it. *This is Liberty, or free Will*, the Root of Moral Good and Evil, the Foundation of all Rewards and Punishments, the distinguishing Perfection of Man from the Creatures below him, and the genuine Cause of an infinite variety of Appearances in the Rational World. By the means of this Power, we can dispose our selves to act, either in, or out of that Order and Decorum, which our wise and good Maker has appointed us to observe. We can consider, what Law he has enjoin'd us to go by as reasonable Creatures; and we can excite our selves to a just and ready Compliance with it: And on the other hand, we can *forbear* all that Thought and Consideration; or if we do think, we can do it *carelessly* and negligently;



gently; either never come to rational Conclusions and Determinations at all, or (if we please) when we have made them, not put them in practice. The establish'd Order of Nature is, *That the Will should always act, in a just and regular subordination to the Dictates of the Understanding*: That the Mind as a sure Guide should go before, determining what is fit to be done and pursu'd, or omitted and avoided; and by that means, direct and lead on the Operations of this Faculty, which ought to chuse or refuse accordingly. And the Understanding being suppos'd to be rightly inform'd, we always act rationally and well, when things go on in this Course; the Mind duly prescribing, and the Will sweetly yielding to its Prescriptions, each Power keeping its proper Place and Office. But whether the Mind be duly inform'd or no, the same Law of Nature must always take place. Some sort of Conclusions must be made (whether they be just or unjust ones; whether plain and express, or only tacit and by Consequence) before the Will formally consents, and gives Orders to the executive Powers to exert themselves. Otherwise the Will of Man were not a noble rational Appetite, but a blind irrational one. For therefore we call it *Appetitus Rationalis*, because it is made to act *sub ductu Rationis*.

However, the Resolutions of the Understanding, even the most sound and positive ones, impose no manner of Necessity on the Will. For even the *last Dictate* it self, is but one of the Prerequisites to Action, and leaves the Will an intire and perfect Dominion over its own Act; which it may therefore either proceed to  
 exert,

exert, or may suspend and forbear, by its own formal native Liberty: Nay, except only in these two Cases, *viz.* When the Object under Consideration, is either Universal Good, or the Supreme and Chiefest Good (*Bonum in Communi*, or, *Summum Bonum*) the former of which is the *Adequate*, and the latter the *Principal* Object of the Will: I say, in all other cases but these, where the thing propos'd is any particular or subordinate Good, not necessarily connected with that which is the Supreme; our Liberty extends here, not only to acting, or not acting, but also to the exerting of specifically different, or contrary Acts: we can chuse or refuse, chuse this or the contrary, as well as chuse or suspend the act of Choice. And this is what the Schoolmen, in their way of talking, mean by their distinction of Liberty, into *Libertas Contrarietatis, sive Specificationis, & Contradictionis, vel Exercitii*. The Terms perhaps may seem obscure (as most of theirs do) but they are just; and we all know by consulting our selves, that there is something in our Natures that has really laid a Foundation for the Use of them.

But to proceed; When the Understanding, well instructed and inform'd of the several Circumstances of a Case, has drawn such Conclusions from them, as are convenient and proper for us to manage our selves by, it has then done its Office; and what ought next to follow, is a sutable compliance of the Will and Passions. But instead of this, the Decrees of the Mind are too often slighted; the Will answers by Aversion and Reluctancy, and prompts the inferior Powers to finish a Rebellion, begun by its own Obstinacy. The Understanding is made to shift and alter its Resolutions, to pass from  
one

one Sentence and Opinion to another, till it has fix'd on some one that will be grateful and pleasing. So that altho it be the establish'd Law in Human Nature, that the Dictates of this Faculty should still precede the Motions of the Will; yet in such Cases, the Understanding acts its part, as a Guide under absolute Command, who must lead that Way only which is pointed out to him by another.

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## S E C T. XVI.

**I**F it be enquir'd, how it comes about that we act after so preposterous and disorderly a manner? That the Understanding which should govern, comes to be thus govern'd and impos'd upon?

I answer, By the ill Use of our *Liberty*; by the undue Encouragements we can give, if we please, to the brutal Powers, our Passions and Affections; which were design'd to be the Servants, and not the Masters of our Reason. The case lies here, *we can give our selves more scope than we ought to do, in our relish of sensible and corporeal Impressions.* We can be more pleas'd and affected with them than we should be; and thereupon give a greater loose to the Passions, than is consistent with the Rules of that Government which we ought to keep up in our selves. By this means the Authority of the Mind is weakned, its Taste vitiated and depraved; and 'tis dispos'd to a tame and easy Compliance, with whatever is agreeable to the Bent of the ignobler Powers. The Consequence of all is, *That by such Encroachments as these, the*  
*Passions*

*Passions grow upon us, and work themselves more and more beyond due Bounds and Government. They importune and sollicit against the Resolves of the debilitated Mind; and by those unaccountable, tho powerful Charms, come to make the Understanding of a Party with them, and bribe it to pronounce on their side.*

So that tho the Understanding, upon due deliberation in the Case propos'd, does at first make a just and right Conclusion, *Ex. Gr. This thing in the present Circumstances ought to be done, and the other should be forborn*; yet by the secret Influences of these Powers, which will recoil against the wholesom Determinations of right Reason, and reverse them too, if not carefully and vigorously defended; it comes to pass, that the former rational Sentence begins to lose its Authority, comes to be more faintly and languidly made, and is at last entirely drop'd; being exchang'd for another, more favourable on the side of the Passions.

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## S E C T. XVII.

FROM what has been said, we may gather some useful *Corollaries*.

Coroll. 1. *'Tis plain from hence, how Men may be said to offend against Light and Knowledg.*

To hate Truth as Truth; that is, purely and formally under that Notion, is to be sure, impossible to any Rational Nature (even the *Diabolical* Nature, is not to be excepted in this case; at the bottom of all whose opposition to God and Goodness, eternal Falshood and Delusion lie.) But to hate Truth, as it may be very  
contrary

contrary to a Man's particular Interests and Affections, is not only possible, but very easy and common. And when Men suffer such Aversions as these to get ground in them, which they ought not to suffer, and which by a better use of their Liberty, they may prevent; when they render their Passions insolent and unruly by faulty Indulgence, or slackning the Reins of Government; and so debauch their Judgments into a corrupt and partial way of pronouncing, contrary to all foregoing sound Conclusions made concerning their Duty, when their Thoughts were serene and cool, and Reason maintain'd its Authority in their Souls: This, I say, is sinning against Knowledg to some purpose. And the Guilt of it lies here, that 'tis so much in a Man's power to take other Measures: He can think, he can look over and consult the solemn Decrees of an enlightned Practical Judgment, registred in his own Breast, from whence his Duty may be clearly known, whenever the Performance of it is disputed. There is no question, but the Aggravations which attend such Practices, are in some certain Cases, exceedingly more heinous than in others; so far, that according to the *Scripture-style*, Men may be said to act *maliciously*, and in a peculiar Sense to sin *wilfully*, after they have receiv'd the Knowledg of the Truth. However, this is in some degree, more or less, the true State of the Case, with respect to all Men, who proceed in any vicious Course, contrary to the sober Dictates of their own Minds, or to any written or reveal'd Law of God. They are all wilful Sinners against the Truth. And the Source of all the Mischief is from hence, *That they will betray their Understandings, to the Insults and base Management of*  
the



*the inferior Powers.* Hence all the contradiction of their Actions to their stated Principles, their continual baffling and confuting themselves, saying one thing and doing quite another:

——*Video Meliora, Proboque,  
Deteriora Sequor.*

Things become Good and Evil to them by turns; and what they are forc'd to condemn at one time, they find Reasons to approve and chuse at another: That is, tho there are no Reasons in the nature of the thing, yet the manag'd Judgment must make Reasons for the present Occasion; and when its own *Deterius* is the *Melius* of the Passions, must alter its Vote, and pronounce *Melius* too.

Coroll. 2. *The cause of all the wrong steps we make in Practice, is Immediately an erroneous Sentence of the Understanding; but Originally and Principally, the ill Use of Liberty, or the Power of the Will.*

Coroll. 3. *From hence appears, the Danger of not checking the Violence and Importunity of the sensitive Powers, in the first Assaults tending to a breach of Duty.*

## S E C T. XVIII.

Coroll. 4. *The only Method to prevent or remedy these Evils, is an Habit of serious Thought and Consideration.*

Not barely to think, but to dwell upon those things that tend to impress the deepest Sense of Duty and Danger upon the Mind. The neglect  
of

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of this, is certainly the most fatal and pernicious Distemper of Mankind; that which creates all their Trouble and Uneasiness, brings on all their Danger, and sometimes terminates in absolute irretrievable Misery in this World, whatever happens in the next.

Now the performance of this great Duty, is the Joint-Business of the Understanding and the Will. To consider, is a proper Act of the Understanding; but a Man cannot consider, without being willing to do so. I don't speak of occasional or accidental Thought, but of solemn Meditations, such as the present Affair requires. Here, to be sure, the Will is deeply concern'd. A Man must both purpose and design it, and be dispos'd and inclin'd to it too. He must see just Reasons for doing it, and then submit to those Reasons; that is, chuse and embrace the Work; after which he actually applies to the Performance of it. So that the Understanding, first rous'd by proper Motives, represents the Reasonableness, and presses the Necessity of the Duty; but then 'tis by a good Use of our Liberty, that we are determin'd to the doing of the thing it self, and break thro all the Difficulties that lie in our way.

Now 'tis a plain case, that we have a Power to do this: We can engage our Understandings in serious Contemplation, if we will; that is, we can determine and settle our selves to think, provided our Wills are dispos'd and inclin'd that way. And this appears from hence, *That if we begin to think of a Subject, we can stop, and put an end to that particular Contemplation when we please. And if we are pursuing one Thought, we can break off, and immediately divert to another very different from the former.* This we all know

to be true, and 'tis an Experiment that we can try at any time: However, as common and as cheap as it is, it shews us the command we have of our Minds, and to how good as well as how ill a Purpose we may manage them, if we think fit.

And therefore, I say, since by exerting our selves as we ought to do, we may bring our selves to a Habit of serious Consideration; how just and reasonable a thing is it that we should set to it, when the Advantages of such a Practice, as well as the Inconveniences we prevent by it, are so many and so great? For Consideration impresses the Arguments to Duty, and makes them sink deep into the Mind; and therefore, by this means, we encrease the Force, and strengthen the Authority of the governing Faculty; which, to be sure, must be of vast advantage. Whereas on the other hand, the neglect of this disarms the Mind, renders it heedless and incautious, and so prepares the way for all those Mischiefs that follow upon its Subjection to the baser and inferior Powers.

## S E C T. XIX.

**B**Y what has been said upon this second Head, it appears, how capable we are of using our Minds otherways than we ought to do, as Rational Beings. If we are not capable of variety of Action, it could not be press'd upon us as matter of Duty and Obligation, to act after this or that particular manner: But 'tis in our Power to manage our selves as we should not do. For God has made us free, as well as intelligent

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telligent Creatures. But I come now to the last  
Head propos'd, viz.

Thirdly, To shew, *That 'tis perfectly agreeable to that original Law or Order which God has establish'd in our reasonable Natures (with respect to the Operations of our Minds) and to the very Design of such a Faculty as Understanding is; that we should receive those things as true and real, for the Proof of which, such an Evidence as that before describ'd, is alludg'd.*

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## S E C T. XX.

**I**N order to the making out of this Proposition, let us first consider, *What our own Knowledge and Experience of our selves, assures us to be plain Matter of Fact in this case.*

We know, that where Proofs of this Nature, and of these Conditions, are offer'd to evince the Truth of things to us, we do actually receive those things as true, and rest in them as such: And that it is not only by Accident, or upon extraordinary Occasions that we do thus; but 'tis our stated Practice, and the Practice of Mankind universally. We are conscious to our selves, of such an Aptitude or Disposition to act after this manner, that we make our selves calm and easy, by yielding and giving way to it. It produces such a pleasing sort of Tranquillity in our Minds, as ought to arise, and does arise from all such Acts, wherein we conform our selves duly to the Impulses of pure unadulterated Nature. On the other hand, we feel that such Evidence of Truth is not to be withstood without Pain and Remorse. There

are some Principles within us, which will recoil upon us, when we set our selves to baffle it: 'Tis swimming against the Stream, labouring against Biass and Constitution, the Reluctancies of which shew the very Attempt to be faulty and injurious.

Farther, we know very well, *that we are not taught nor train'd up, to this way of using and exerting of our Minds.* 'Tis true, that we are taught particular Methods of searching out, and proving Truth. But we have never any need of being inform'd in the general, that when things are clear, as made out by that sort of Proof which agrees to their Nature, we should assent to the Truth of them; or that we should not doubt, when after accurate Searches, we find nothing to be a just Cause of doubting, in the Nature of things, abstracting from all our own Notions and Hypotheses. No Parent or Tutor ever infus'd these Principles; tho they may (and ought to) inculcate and improve them. The earliest displays of Human Nature, evidently shew, that they are lodg'd within, before any of our Instructors begin the kind Office of our Education.

And for the proof of all this, I appeal to Human Nature and common Experience, of which every Man is a Judg: So that the case is as easy to be thorowly sifted and examin'd, as any can possibly be. 'Twould be a Crime to be solicitous about answering such Persons, as should bluntly deny what I have here said, to be Matter of Fact. I would bestow the same Pains upon their Conviction, that I would in a rational Confutation of that Man, who should tell me in good earnest, that *Ice and Fire* are the same sort of Bodies; or that 'tis *dark Night* in that  
very



very Place, where my own Eyes and those of all other Men upon the Spot, see the Sun in his *Meridian Lustre*.

The result of the Argument therefore is this: Since (by what has been said here) it appears, that there is a disposition in Human Nature to act after this manner, such as does not, nor cannot proceed from Instruction and Education, but is most certainly *inbred* and *congenial* with it: Also since (by what was shewn before) it must of necessity be granted, that there is some certain Law or Order establish'd in the reasonable Nature of Man, which should dispose him to use and exert his Mind, after a manner becoming an intelligent Creature, upon proper Motives and Inducements: It follows, *That to act after this manner; that is, to yield the Assent of our Understandings to such Evidence of Truth, is plainly to act in Conformity to the Tenor of that Law.*

## S E C T. XXI.

Secondly, **I***T must needs be our wise Creator's Purpose and Intent, in endowing us with such a Power as Understanding, that we should assent to those things as true, which are recommended to our Belief, by an Evidence of this Nature. And that we may be the more thorowly apprized of the Truth of this, let us trace this matter from the very Original.*

'Tis plain, *That we have a Power, by which we are enabled to believe, or assent to some Propositions, as true.*

And as 'tis certain, that the infinitely wise Author of our Beings, would not give this or any other Principle or Power *for nothing*; that is, not intending it should ever be exerted or brought to act: so 'tis as certain, he could never design that it should be brought into act *by nothing*; or that it should exert it self arbitrarily, and fortuitously, or out of pure Spontaneity, without the Influence of some preceding Motives to rouse and excite it thereto. For otherwise, a rational Creature would be a mere whimsical unaccountable sort of *Automaton*. That which we call the best Workmanship of God Almighty, in the visible Creation, would be fram'd with infinitely less Prudence and Skill, than the meanest pieces of Art here amongst our selves, which are made to observe elegant Order, and to act from fixed Laws and Principles.

Since then 'tis necessary, that some sort of Motives or Reasons, should always lead on the Operations of this Power of believing, or assenting to things as true; the next Question is, *Of what Kind and Nature they ought to be?* What ought to be the exciting Principle to such a sort of Action, as that which we call Belief? It cannot be Obscurity and Confusion in the Things or Propositions we consider; or Doubt and Uncertainty in our own Minds. It could never be design'd, that these should be the Foundations of our Belief and Assent. For this casts still a more heinous Reflection upon the infinite Perfections of God, to imagine him to have made Man so awkward and perverse a Creature; a thing of so crooked and contrary Disposition, that Obscurity should excite his Faculties, and Uncertainty it self should determine him to Action.

And

And therefore, it must needs be his Purpose and Intent (since we cannot doubt but he has fram'd our Natures with the most exact Wisdom and Counsel) *that we should exert this Power upon such Motives or Considerations, as should set Matters in a fair and clear Light before us, and be sufficient to prevent all rational Doubt and Uncertainty about them.* Not only that confus'd precarious Evidence should not procure the Assent of our Minds; but also that all Evidence of a contrary Nature, should do it. For since the plain Use of that Faculty we call Understanding, is to subscribe and assent to Truth; it would be as monstrous and irregular, to suppose the Author of Nature had so fram'd it, that bright and unexceptionable Representations of Truth should not excite it to yield that Assent; as it would be to imagine, that he had made Darkeness natural to it, and fitted it to be wrought on, only by the Motives of Intricacy and Confusion. But now, we are under an absolute Necessity of receiving many things as true and real, where we can neither have the Testimony of *Sense* nor accurate *Demonstration*, to assure us of the Truth of those things. We must believe them, and yet cannot have the Proof of them by either of these ways. And therefore it follows, *That an Evidence of such a Nature, as was before describ'd, does lay a direct and positive Obligation upon us, to yield our Assent in all those Cases, wherein we cannot have sensible or demonstrative Proof.*

## S E C T. XXII.

WE have hitherto prosecuted the first Argument, drawn from the Constitution of Human Nature, to prove the Obligatory Nature of the Evidence before describ'd; which Argument has this Advantage, *That there is plain and obvious Matter of Fact in our selves to support it.*

And I hope, that which follows, will not be without some peculiar Advantages likewise.

Secondly, *The disowning an Evidence of this Nature, has a direct tendency to take away all Moral Certainty, and leaves no room for our Belief of any thing, but what is either an Object of Sense, or Matter of pure Demonstration.*

And therefore, we are bound not to reject it, but to assent to those things as true, for the Proof of which, such Evidence is propounded to us.

To set this Argument in a clear Light, two things are to be done.

First, To shew, *That the rejecting of an Evidence of this Nature has a direct Tendency to take away all Moral Certainty; or to render Moral Evidence, from whence that Certainty arises, wholly useless and insignificant in the World.*

Secondly, To shew, *That Moral Evidence is not to be taken away, nor things to be brought to that pass; that sensible or demonstrative Proof should be requir'd or given, for every thing that is to be relied on as Truth amongst Men. It neither can be so, nor ought to be so: 'Tis neither possible or convenient, according to the Constitution and State of the World we live in.*

From

From both these together, the Reason of the Consequence will appear, *viz. That therefore an Evidence of this Nature, makes it strictly just and rational for us to yield the Assent of our Minds.*

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## S E C T. XXIII.

**T**HE first of these *Propositions*, is easily made out. *For there is no more necessary, in order to the highest Degree of Moral Certainty that we can attain to; than an Evidence of such Qualifications and Conditions, as I have already explain'd.* Let any one consider the Description given of it, and see whether there can be any thing farther requir'd, to give us a compleat Satisfaction of the Truth of any thing, in a Case where Demonstration is wanting, or our own Eyes are not to be us'd to convince us thereof. And after a sober Examination of the Matter, I make no question but he will find, that such a Proof is sufficient to give us all the Assurance, that we can rationally desire, or really need to have, or that the very Nature of such Cases will allow of. Therefore I infer, *All sorts of Evidence requisite to produce Moral Certainty, will be sure to fall within the Limits determin'd in that Description.*

And therefore, if the Evidence we have describ'd, may be rejected in any one Case propos'd; by a Parity of Reason, all other Proofs of the same kind may, and must be rejected too, if we act consistently with our selves. For when things are alike, and in their own Natures do not allow any Difference to be made; if we make a Difference, it must be resolv'd intirely  
into



into Humour and Self-Will. Therefore upon this *Hypothesis*, all *Moral Evidence and Certainty* are at once thrown out of the World, and we must never believe nor depend upon any thing as true, but what is fairly demonstrated to us, or attested by our *Senses*. Now if the gross Absurdity and Falshood, if the wretched and intolerable Consequences of such a Supposition be well demonstrated; 'twill be certain beyond Dispute, that we are firmly oblig'd to acquiesce in an Evidence of the foremention'd Characters.

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## S E C T. XXIV.

**I** Come therefore now to shew,  
Secondly, That *Moral Evidence is not to be taken away*; or that *Proofs of this nature, are of the utmost Consequence and Importance to the World, and carry something along with them, which is highly satisfactory and convincing to the Understanding of Mankind.*

And in order to the clearing of this, I shall do these two things distinctly.

*First*, Enquire into the Nature of Moral Evidence; see what, and whence the Obligation of it springs; how far it may be compar'd with Mathematical Evidence, and does agree therewith, in producing the very same Effects on our Minds.

*Secondly*, Consider the Usefulness and Necessity of these sorts of Proofs in the World, and the horrible Consequences that would follow upon the Supposition, That Men were not to be govern'd by them.

*First,*

*First*, I shall comprise the Substance of what I have to say upon the former of these Heads, (*viz. Concerning the Nature of Moral Evidence and Certainty*) in the following Propositions.

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## P R O P. I.

**T**HERE are certain stated Laws and Rules of Action, which Men, consider'd not only as rational Agents, but as Members of Society, as standing in various sorts of Relations, and tied by many Bonds one to another, have Universally a strict and necessary Regard to.

Affection, Inclination, Temper, Endowments, Interest, External Circumstances, and Condition in the World; are general Motives which fail not to influence Mankind, to act in their several Places, after this or that manner, upon proper Occasions, as they have Power and Opportunity.

That these things are so in Fact, we are assur'd by all our Knowledg and Experience of the World. 'Tis as plain, that Men are acted and influenc'd by these Principles in all their Conversation and Affairs, as that they exist, or move, or do any thing here.

Why such Principles as these (which I have mention'd) should be establish'd, as the grand Springs of Motion in the Rational World; why Men should be prompted to act and move by these, and not by others of another Nature: This is to be resolv'd intirely into the wise  
and

and sovereign disposals of our great Creator. He knew perfectly well, how to adapt the World and Human Nature to each other, after the best and fittest manner. He knew how to establish Laws for Men to proceed by, that their acting in such or such a sort, should be the most beautiful for Creatures of their Frame and Make, in such a State, and under such Circumstances, as he design'd to place them here.

Whatsoever we are sure is true in Fact, with respect to the general Laws and Constitution of the World, we may be certain was most wisely consulted and determin'd. And consequently, that these Laws and Principles we speak of (which do obtain in Fact) are the fittest and most suitable, to the Nature and Circumstances of Mankind, in the present State.

But I must add; *It was necessary, that some certain Laws and Principles of Action or other, should be establish'd in the rational World, as well as in that of Matter.*

And that, when these were once exactly adjusted by infinite Wisdom and Prudence to Human Nature, in all its Relations and Capacities in the present Life; it was requisite they should always be maintain'd, and should stately influence Men throughout their whole Practice, when they act as reasonable and sociable Creatures.

For a World of intelligent Creatures, acting from no stated Laws and Principles, would have been as poor an Argument of Wisdom and Counsel, as a rough ill-shapen Lump of Matter, or a vast System of Bodies tumbling about each other, in the utmost Hurry and Confusion, instead of a beautiful and well-order'd Fabrick.

Nor is the Honour of the wise, great, and good Governour of the Universe, a jot less concern'd

concern'd in preserving and keeping up a general Order and Decorum amongst reasonable Beings; than in preserving Method and Regularity in the Works of Nature, or in appointing them at first. And therefore, what Motives and Principles of Action, he in his infinite Wisdom thought fittest for Men to proceed by, ought to be standing and lasting: So that they should not be mov'd uncertainly and precariously, sometimes by one set of Principles, and at other times by those directly contrary, or which have no manner of Affinity or Relation to them; but always from the same general Grounds and Reasons, and for the same general Ends and Purposes; whatever different Appearances the Actions of different Men may seem to make in the World. This is like the Disposal and Contrivance of an infinitely knowing and prudent Being. Whereas, the other way of proceeding, would represent him as a Being void of Counsel and Penetration, and make as if he had set the World together as well as he could; tho not well enough, to demonstrate the high and glorious Perfections of his own Nature.

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## P R O P. II.

**B***Y virtue of these Laws, so constantly and universally obtaining in the reasonable World, it follows, that such and such things will of Course be brought to pass; and on the contrary, that others as certainly will not.*

We deduce the certainty of *Physical Events* and Appearances, from those fix'd and establish'd  
Laws

Laws of the Natural World, by the means of which they are to be brought about, and which must be suspended or violated, if they are not brought about. And tho the Author of Nature, who has establish'd these Laws, can with infinite Ease, whenever he pleases, put a stop to them, and turn things out of their ordinary Course; and moreover, tho we cannot demonstrate, or by any other sound Proof assure our selves, that these Appearances shall proceed and go on for the time to come, after the same manner as they have done for the time past: Yet since we know of no Reasons, to induce us to believe that things will be put out of their usual Order; we expect and depend upon them as certain. Accordingly, when we see the Sun set at Night, we assure our selves without Demonstration, that he will rise again the next Morning. We make no doubt, but Vapours will ascend up into the Atmosphere, that Rains and Dews will fall, that Vegetation will go on, that the several Seasons of the Year will regularly succeed one another; tho he that first impress'd, and therefore continually preserves all these Motions (by which our World is maintain'd in this happy Order) can with a word speaking, make all cease again, and we are at no time *Mathematically* certain that he will not do so.

Now if we are rationally, tho not demonstratively sure, of these Events in Nature, upon the account of the establish'd Laws on which they depend; we may be rationally, tho not demonstratively sure, of such or such Events in the Moral or Rational World, upon the score of the stated Laws, on which they depend, and by virtue of which they are to be brought to pass.

Upon



Upon what pretence can I think or imagine, that Men will neglect pursuing what they believe to be their true and real Interest, in such Cases where they must see and know, that their Interest is nearly concern'd? Why should I believe, that they will lay aside all the common Passions and Inclinations of Human Nature, and take Measures quite contrary to those, which Mankind always proceed by in the like Cases? If I find matters to be so, that here are all the proper Inducements, that use to stir and engage Men to act after this or that manner, and never fail to produce the Effect; I must suppose after a very arbitrary and precarious manner, if I suppose them to forget, what is so much rooted in Human Nature, and is so consonant to all the Laws and Modes of Human Action; by going out of the common Road, and acting just the Reverse of what Men ordinarily do. Nor do Men ever do thus, while they keep in the right mind; unless they have some superior predominant Reasons for so doing. And in that case, to sacrifice a less Interest, for what they really believe to be a greater, is still acting by the same general Law, that always did, and ever will govern Mankind. To go contrary to Temper, Inclination, and all the apparent Obligations of worldly Circumstances, upon weighty and valuable Considerations of another Nature; is only changing a Man's Motives and Inducements, and proceeding upon the same common Principles as before.

But where I find no Appearance of any such Reasons, as should suspend or alter the usual Course of Mens Actions; I have as just ground to expect that the same Effects will come to pass, which always do in the like Cases; as to believe, that Night and Day, Summer and Winter, will  
come

come on in their wonted Order, when I see no ill Symptoms in Nature, that threaten the contrary.

Coroll. *Hence may be understood, the Nature and true Origin, of what we call Moral Certainty and Impossibility.*

When I find matters to be so, with respect to any case propos'd, that some gross Absurdities or Inconsistences, some plain and manifest Contradiction to these establish'd Laws of the World, must necessarily be involv'd, if such and such Effects do or do not come to pass amongst Men: I am then *morally certain*, that they will not or will come to pass; being assur'd that the standing Laws of the World, do prohibit such Repugnances or Contradictions, and therefore are a sufficient guard to secure me in my Belief, that things will work, according to the rational Conclusions I have drawn concerning them. And upon the same score, we justly and properly use the Term *Impossibility* in these cases; not meaning a simple absolute Impossibility, no more than a simple absolute Certainty: But *ex Hypothesi*, upon supposition that Men are influenc'd, in their Actions, by the same Principles and Motives, which never fail to govern them, where plain and extraordinary Reasons for their doing otherwise, do not interpose: And this is the very same sort of Impossibility in the Rational World, with that which we call *Physical*, in the World of Nature. The one is as strict and proper as the other, with respect to the Laws on which it depends. And therefore, for example, speaking of some extraordinary great and publick Event, we make no scruple to say, *'tis impossible that the Memory of it should*

should be totally lost : Or that an Imposture, wherein a whole Nation, or many Nations are concern'd, should be carry'd on successfully in the Face of Thousands of the most inveterate Enemies, who have Policy, Sagacity, Power and Opportunity, to do all things, that can be imagin'd necessary for the Discovery of it. Or that a Party or Society of Men, having all Advantages in their Hands, to establish their own most valu'd Interest, and (without any Danger or Prejudice to themselves) effectually to ruin that of their Adversaries, which is fundamentally destructive of theirs ; should yet neglect to do this, and make way for the others to over-top and crush them. These things are impossible. Not that they involve any thing of pure *Physical* Contradictions ; but *Political* Considerations, working on the Tempers and Passions of Men, will make them act otherwise. Common Interest, is Political Good. And Political or Civil Good, bears the same proportion to Society, that Natural Good does to an Individual. Nor is it a jot less absurd, to imagine a Community or Body of Men, thus acting against (or not acting for) their darling Interest, when 'tis in their Power to do so ; than to suppose a Man as an Animal, or a Rational Agent, shunning the Good, and embracing the Evil, which relates to him in either of those Capacities.

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### P R O P. III.

**I**N some Cases, where there is only Human Testimony alledg'd to evince the Truth of things ; those universal Laws of the World before

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*fore mention'd, may be so far concern'd, and from the very Nature of the Case, it may be necessary to have so great a regard to them; that we may have full security of the Truth and Reality of those things, as made out to us by Human Testimony alone, without any other Proof.*

Testimony is undoubtedly a necessary Article, in the Business of Moral Evidence; but we conclude wrong, when we make it to be the *whole* of that Evidence, or that which gives it its main Force and Strength. To state the matter fairly; Testimony, in its regard to Moral Evidence, is as one Proposition towards a Syllogism, which requires two, either express or imply'd, in order to the making of a Conclusion.

I do not affirm this, of every trifling inconsiderable Case that happens in the World; but I do of Multitudes that frequently occur in Fact, and of others, whose Circumstances may be similar to these.

Now here, I say, that to compleat a Proof of this kind, and do the Argument that Justice, which (in the Nature of things) ought to be done it; besides bare Authority or Testimony, we are to argue upon *Human Nature*, and the Laws which Mankind observe, in their several Relations and Obligations to each other.

So that these sort of Proofs, to represent them as they ought to be, do indeed run after this manner: *Ex. Gr. If in this case propos'd, Circumstances be really thus and thus; then this or that Effect will certainly follow —.*

*But Circumstances are really so ——— Therefore, &c.*



In this Argument, the Sequel of the Major Proposition, is grounded upon the aforesaid general Principles. For because I know the Dispositions and Tendencies of Human Nature, and what the stated Practice and Methods of Procedure amongst Mankind are; therefore I know, that such and such Effects will follow regularly, upon certain Suppositions made.

The Minor Proposition, I take as Testimony; I am certified by another Person, that Circumstances are really so and so.

Now tho the Truth of my Conclusion, depends partly upon the Truth of this Proposition, and I cannot assure my self of the one, unless I am perfectly satisfy'd of the other; yet the Case may be so, that I may have such a Degree of Security, of the Truth of my Minor Proposition, as to be free from the least imaginable doubt of the Truth of my Conclusion; and that upon such Principles, as are absolutely unexceptionable.

For besides the *Honour* and known *Veracity* of the Person testifying, such Circumstances as these may also concur. There may be an utter *Impossibility* of any manner of Advantage, redounding to this Person, by imposing a Falshood on me: So that I can be sure, he could have no kind of Motive or Temptation, to incline him to act so fraudulent and dishonest a part. Again, matters may be so, that the Cheat must infallibly be *discover'd*, by some other Methods quickly after, in case he should abuse me, by a false Representation of things at present. I cannot perhaps, be long without knowing the right of the matter, whether this Person tells it me or no; and if he does not, he draws (it may be) a thousand Censures and Reproaches upon



himself, and makes himself odious and contemptible to all Mankind, that have any Knowledge of him. Now where the Case is such, that these (and it may be, other weighty and convincing) Circumstances do plainly concur; tho I ground one of the Propositions of my Syllogism, upon Human Testimony, yet I am at no Uncertainty at all about the Truth of my Conclusion.

For I know, that all Men are influenc'd in their Actions by some Motives or other.

And I know, that they naturally abhor such Effects as Hatred, Shame and Contempt, from the rest of their Fellow-Creatures. And therefore, when matters are brought to that pass, that I must either contradict these plain Notions, and proceed upon such as are the very Reverse of them; or else receive a Testimony that is alledg'd, as what gives me a true and sincere account of things: I am then determin'd to admit that Testimony as true; and I forfeit all Pretensions to right Reason, and even to common Sense and Understanding, if I do not.

*Coroll. 'Tis plain therefore, that we are oblig'd to consider something more in many Cases of Testimony, than the bare Word and Report of him, who delivers that Testimony.*

Because (by the very Circumstances of the thing) we may be oblig'd to consider, the *Authority* of the Speaker or Writer, in conjunction with all those Reasons, founded upon the *general Laws* of the World; by which we may argue our selves into a just Assurance, of the Truth of what is thus reported to us.

## P R O P. IV.

**S**TRICT and perfect Demonstration, proceeds from such Premisses (and such only) as are true, first, immediate, more known, prior to, and Causes of the Conclusion.

By this I mean, what we commonly call the Demonstration,  $\tau\tilde{\epsilon} \delta' i' \tilde{\epsilon}\pi$ , or *Propter quid*; in which we always argue from a proper immediate Cause, either Intrinsical to the Subject, as Matter, Form, or some predemonstrated Affection; or else Extrinsical to it, as an efficient or final Cause.

The Assent we yield to such sort of Proof, or the Knowledg of Conclusions infer'd from Premisses thus qualify'd, is firm and certain in the highest Degree possible; and by way of Eminence and Distinction from all others, is call'd *Scientia*. To know, in this Sense, is clearly to understand the Cause for which a thing is; that it is the Cause of that thing, and that it cannot be otherwise. So that in such Cases as these, the Certainty we arrive at, concerning the Truth of things, is not only Indubitable, but Infallible too; not simply and absolutely Infallible, for the Divine Knowledg only is such, but Conditionally, or upon Supposition, that our Faculties are not misled or deceiv'd.

As for the other sort of Demonstration, viz. The  $\tilde{\epsilon}\pi$ , or *Quod sit*; here the *Terminus Medius*,  
K 3 instead

instead of being an immediate nearest Cause, is either a remote one, or some necessary Effect. And therefore, it being impossible, that the Premises in this kind of Demonstration, should come up to the Conditions of the former; it is somewhat less advantageous, and in the Order of things, to be reckon'd of an inferior and more imperfect kind.

However, a Demonstration of this nature, may give us all the Assurance of the Truth of things, that the  $\delta\iota' \ \acute{\omicron}\pi$  it self does or can do; and our Conclusions here, are in some sense *Scientifical* as well as there. The difference is, that the former shews us the prime Causes and Reasons of things, and that they *must necessarily* be so as we know them to be; but the latter only assures us, that they *are so* in Reality, either by some genuine Consequences of them, or some Causes which lie at a farther Distance. But they are sufficient to extort the Assent of the Mind, and leave us, as I said, compleatly satisfy'd and convinc'd. Of this kind, are mostly those Demonstrations which are us'd in *Physical*, *Metaphysical*, and some *Theological* Matters. Our Demonstrations, for example, of the Existence of a God, being all of them  $\acute{\omicron}\pi$ , and *à Posteriori*, as proceeding from the Effects. Ostensive Mathematical Demonstrations, are all of them of the former sort, *viz.*  $\delta\iota' \ \acute{\omicron}\pi$ , or *Propter quid*. For they proceed from predemonstrated Affections, which run up at last into plain self-evident Principles or Propositions, which (for the Dignity and Importance of them) the *Mathematicians* call by the Name of *Axioms*.

But besides the direct or *ostensive* Demonstration, either  $\delta\iota' \ \acute{\omicron}\pi$  or  $\acute{\omicron}\pi$ , in which the Conclusion

clusion is evidently and directly infer'd, from Premisses of all, or only some of the foremention'd Conditions; there is another sort, which we call *Demonstratio ducens ad Absurdum vel Impossibile*: Wherein we argue, *That the Conclusion infer'd from such or such Premisses, must needs be true, because the Contradictory to it, is apparently False and Absurd*. Now tho this be the lowest of all Demonstrations, as not directly and immediately inferring the thing it self to be prov'd, and therefore is not to be chosen, where an offensive Demonstration can be had; yet 'tis universally allow'd to be sound and good, and accordingly it passes current amongst the *Mathematicians* themselves, who frequently use it in making out the Truth of many of their Propositions, and that not only in the mix'd or concrete Sciences, but also in the pure or abstracted ones. And in the Nature of the thing it self, this *reductio ad absurdum*, is good and sufficient Proof. For we are under eternal Obligations to avoid Contradictions and Absurdities; and that not only in matters capable of Demonstration, but those of any other Nature also. But of this more by and by.

*Coroll.* 'Tis plain therefore, how *Moral Proof* differs from *strict and perfect Demonstration*. 'Tis impossible that the Premisses made use of in this sort of Proof, should come up to the Conditions, which accurate Demonstration requires. However,

## P R O P. V.

**S**OME Propositions admitting only of Moral Proof, may be as evident, as others capable of perfect Demonstration.

Evidence, I take to be the clear appearance of Truth to the Mind, producing a ready Assent to it as such. So that Evidence may always be taken, as proportional to the *Quickness* of the Assent; an higher Degree of Evidence, producing a more sudden and speedy Effect on the Understanding, than a lower Degree does. This I believe will hardly be disputed.

We know likewise, that the Propositions or Premises in Mathematical Demonstration, derive their Force from some others before demonstrated, and these from others; and so at last we come up to Axioms, or First Principles, for which we have no Demonstration at all: For if we had, then there must be other Principles, prior to, and more known than them; and consequently, they would not be first Principles, which is contrary to the *Hypothesis*. In like manner, these other Principles are either demonstrable, or not: If they are, then we run on at this rate, *ad Infinitum*: If they are not, then we must necessarily stop at some that are not capable of Demonstration.

The like may be said of Moral Propositions, and the Principles they are ultimately resolv'd into.

Now if some Moral Principles may be as evident as some of the plainest in *Mathematicks*, then



then the first or second, &c. Step of Genuine Consequence, deriv'd from the *Moral Principles*, will be as evident as the first or second, &c. Step of Genuine Consequence deriv'd from the *Mathematical*. For the just Consequences of equally evident Principles, at equal removes from those Principles themselves, must needs be equally evident.

But some Moral Principles, are as evident as some of the plainest in *Mathematicks*. Therefore the Propositions may be so too. For instance, *That Society could not be maintain'd in the World, without a mutual Trust of one Man in another*, is as evident, as this Axiom in *Geometry*; *That if equal things, be added to, or subtracted from equals, the Sums or Remainders will be equal*. For let them both be propos'd to any Person, capable of understanding the Terms on both sides; and he shall as speedily assent to the former as the latter.

If we were to judg by *Numbers*, more Persons would admit the former for a Truth without Difficulty, than would be latter. Those that have no Notion of Sums and Remainders, would readily grant you, that the World must fall in pieces, if Men could not trust one another.

*Ocular Demonstration*, is full as plain on one side as the other. A Man may as well see, that People converse and deal together in the World, upon this Principle; as he may see, that when six Inches are taken off on each side, from two Lines of twelve Inches a piece, there will be six Inches remaining in each Line.

Farther, tho the one be an *absolute abstracted Verity*, a Principle of eternal Truth; and the other of a *mix'd and concrete Nature*, relating to

to the Frame and Constitution of the World; yet these Considerations are in their own Natures foreign to the matter of Evidence, and have no direct Tendency to render it either greater or less. Tho by accident, Application to Matter and sensible things, may contribute to the encrease of Evidence, and remove some Difficulties, which a total abstraction from Matter may leave the Mind involv'd in. However, we know, that many Principles in *Concrete Mathematicks*, are fully as evident to us, as others in the pure abstracted Parts; and that is sufficient to bear me out in asserting, *That unless some other particular Reason can be assign'd, the Moral Principle is not therefore less evident than the Geometrical one (before mention'd) because the former is a mix'd, and the latter a simple abstracted Verity.*

The Comparison made in this Example, may be made in like manner in various others. So that the present Proposition, I hope, is sufficiently clear.

*Coroll. Therefore it may be as absurd to deny some Propositions, which admit only Moral Proof, as to deny others capable of strict Geometrical Demonstration.*

For Absurdity is heightned in proportion to the Evidence of the Proposition deny'd. So that if two Propositions of an equal Evidence, tho of a different Nature, are propos'd; the Absurdities of denying them will be equal. And since some Moral Propositions may be equally evident with some *Geometrical* ones, 'twill be as absurd to deny the former as the latter. Because, I say, 'tis the Evidence or Plainness of Propositions, and not the Subject Matter, which makes it absurd to deny them.

*Schol.*

*Schol.* It will not follow from this Proposition, That we may have the same infallible Certainty, of the Truth of Moral Propositions, that we have of those in Mathematicks. Two Propositions may be equally evident, that is, The Understanding may yield the same Degree of quick and easy Assent to the Truth of them; and yet being infer'd from Premisses of a very different Nature, the Certainty we have of them both, may not be the same, but very much different. In accurate Demonstration, the Premisses are of such a Nature, as to make us infallibly certain of the Conclusion. In some Moral Proofs, the Premisses are of such a Nature, as to render us indubitably certain of the Conclusion; that is, we can acquiesce (without any rational Doubt or Scruple) in the Truth of it, tho we don't infer it to our selves after that strict and very exact way, in which we infer a Mathematical one. So that equal Evidence, or the equally ready appearance of two Propositions of different kinds (and therefore infer'd from Principles of a different Nature) will never conclude the same Modus of Certainty in those Propositions.

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## P R O P. VI.

**A**S in Geometrical Reasonings, Truths are many times infer'd by the indirect Method of Demonstration, or Deduction to Impossibility; so the same sort of Argumentation takes place, in matters only capable of Moral Proof; where by fair Chains of Consequence,  
gross

*gross and palpable Absurdities are the last Result of such and such Hypotheses laid down.*

I shall not need to subjoin any particular Proof of this Proposition; the Reason of which is so plain, from what has been shewn already at PROP. I. and II.

All that I shall observe, is, *That there will be a Proof of it, I hope, sufficiently convincing, in the Third Part of this Discourse; where we shall have an occasion to pursue in a pretty close manner, some Enquiries, relating to the Books which contain the Christian Revelation.*

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## PROP. VII.

**A** *Reduction to Absurdity, in some Proofs of the Moral Kind, is much more to be avoided, than the falling into any Inconvenience, consequent upon the denial of Physical or Mathematical Propositions.*

There's no doubt to be made, but a greater Inconvenience is more carefully to be avoided by us at any time, than a less. And we must needs allow that to be a greater Inconvenience, according to the real Nature of things, in which a Man is oblig'd to stand by Consequences, which taken in their full extent, involve the most Intricacy and Disadvantage.

And those Consequences are certainly the most wretched and perplex'd, which do not only affect the Person himself, who is forc'd to stand by them; but have also a Tendency to publick  
Mischief

Mischief and Disorder. He that obstinately persists in an Assertion, which will at last end in this Conclusion, *that he has no Sense*; is not driven to such Extremities, as he who gives his Adversary scope to conclude, *that he has neither Sense, nor Principles, that render him fit for Human Conversation.*

The Character of a Fool, added to that of an Enemy to the Interests of Mankind, is intrinsically worse than an Imputation of bare Folly, or want of Understanding.

Now the Case lies here. Tho the Denial of *Physical* or *Mathematical* Theorems, leads to some Conclusions, the standing by which, shews a Man to be invincibly Obstinate or Stupid; yet all the ill Consequences of this, terminate in himself, and spread no farther: He gets an ill Name by it; but the Publick is never the worse for any particular Man's being, or making himself a Fool.

On the other hand, there is all this and more, consequent upon the Denial of some *Moral* Arguments. They may be resolv'd into Principles, as evidently true as any Axioms in *Geometry*. Therefore there is equal Folly and Impertinency, in the denial of them. And then, because they relate to the Actions and Affairs of Mankind; the Consequences may be such, as to destroy the Peace and Order of the whole World, if Men should generally proceed after the same manner. So that there is no room for any rational Dispute, on which side the worst and most perplex'd Absurdities lie. However, if we were to abate this Article of equal Folly and Stupidity; yet the other of the Consequences, would still vastly preponderate.



For I would fain know, which of these two, a Man should most rationally scruple; *To be cramp'd and puzzl'd in a Point of pure Theory; or to be forc'd upon plain and open Contradictions to all the Laws of Society, and Human Nature it self?* Certainly, Inconveniences of such a kind as affect Life and common Practice (tho they should not be so extremely gross and ridiculous as some others may be) are yet in the Nature of the thing, and in the Judgment of all wise Men, far more to be avoided, than those which relate to mere Speculation, and only reduce the Understanding to a Distress.

Coroll. 1. *If therefore a Proposition, in Physics or Mathematicks, be universally allow'd to be fairly prov'd; when the contradictory Proposition thereto, plainly appears to be absurd: Then à fortiori, when a Moral Proposition is denied, and the Contradictory thereto, appears plainly to involve Absurdities of that worse sort; the Proof of that Proposition should be acknowledg'd to be just and legitimate.*

Coroll. 2. *And therefore those Persons act a most ridiculous part, who scruple running upon Inconveniences in a Point of Science; and will venture upon the grossest Absurdities that can be, by an irrational denial of Moral Proofs.*

For the better understanding the scope of the two following Propositions, I would premise, That there are two distinct things to be consider'd, with respect to the Issue or Result of Demonstration.

One is, *The bare evincing, or making out the Truth of such or such a thing, which was propos'd*

to be clear'd or made out thereby. The other is, *The Satisfaction or Acquiescency of the Mind in the Demonstration offer'd to it*: By which means it comes to pass, that the Mind not only subscribes to the Truth of the Demonstration, and allows it to be sound and good; but does it also with a peculiar Pleasure, and finds it self wonderful easy, and free from all Scruples in so doing.

This premis'd, I say in the next place,

## P R O P. VIII.

**S**OME Moral Proofs go as far, in evincing the Truth of things to us, as some sort of Demonstration can possibly do.

The Premisses in some Moral Proofs, may have such Conditions as may be sufficient to produce a full Conviction in our Minds, *that such and such things are actually Matter of Fact.*

But the *Demonstratio* ὅτι, or *quod sit*, does only prove, *that things are really so or so.*

Therefore, as to the Point of evincing Truth, some Moral Proofs may go as far as just Demonstration.

*Coroll. 1.* Therefore we ought not to discredit Moral Evidence, upon any such account as this, *viz. That it does not shew us from immediate Causes, why things must needs be so and so, and cannot possibly be otherwise.*

For if it be to be rejected upon this score, then all our Demonstrations *à Posteriori*, must be thrown out of doors too.

Besides,

Besides, to disown it for this Reason, is to quarrel with Moral Evidence, because it is not the same with rigorous Demonstration *à Priori*; which alone, is able to give us such an Assurance, as what the *Corollary* speaks of.

Coroll. 2. *Moral Proofs go as far, in the way of convincing and satisfying our Minds, as is for the most part either Necessary, Useful, or Possible, in the Nature of things.*

For there are vastly fewer Cases, in which we can demonstrate *à Priori*; than such in which we can proceed the other way, and shew that things are really thus and thus in Fact. And then, 'tis likewise manifest, that in most Cases, 'tis enough with respect to all the Ends and Purposes of our Knowledg, that we have undeniable Proof, that things are actually and really true. This might easily be evinc'd beyond all Contradiction, by enquiring into the true Ends of the several kinds of Human Knowledg, and shewing, that such an Assurance (as I now speak of) is in all respects sufficient to answer those Ends. And therefore, since Moral Proofs are sufficient to give us that Assurance, they are sufficient to do all, that is either Necessary, Useful, or (for the most part) Possible to be done.

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## P R O P. IX.

**T**HE Assent of our Minds to some Moral Conclusions, is attended with as little hesitation and doubt of the Truth of them; as that which we give to such Conclusions,

sions, as are infer'd à Priori, in the most strict and rigorous way.

There is plenty of Cases ready at hand, to put this Proposition out of all Dispute.

Such for example, are those of innumerable *Places, Things, Persons, Affairs and Events*, which we never had, nor can possibly have, any direct personal Knowledge of; and yet we are as far from calling the Truth of any of them in question, or being at all uneasy upon that account, as we are from suspecting the Truth of those Conclusions, which the *Geometricians* do in their clear way of reasoning demonstrate to us. I don't say, we have the same sort of Certainty in both Cases; or that the Certainties on both sides, are produc'd by the same sort of Principles, or after the same manner: But I assert, *That we have no more doubt in many Cases on one side, than we have in any on the other.*

Men rest as well satisfied, they express as much Assurance, they are as little apprehensive of any ill Consequences which may possibly follow upon their being deluded in such Instances as these: In short, they shew by Words, by Practice and Conduct, by Temper and Resentment, all the signs of a perfect Security, that they are right in their Trust and Dependance; that any skilful *Mathematician* can do, in his Repose upon the Truth, of what *Euclid* and *Archimedes* have prov'd in their Writings.

And the reason is plain: For there are so many absurd and contradictory things that must come to pass, if a Man be deceiv'd in his Belief, in many of these common Cases; there must have been such Confederacies, Contrivances and

L

Designs

Designs carry'd on amongst some particular Men, in order to cheat all the rest of Mankind, and secure the Delusion everlastingly from Discovery; that one may safely say, such things were impossible ever to have been brought about; or that they could not have come to pass, unless the stated Course of things were alter'd, and the Laws by which the World is usually govern'd, were intirely abolish'd, to make way for others of a quite contrary nature.

Now this shocks a Man at the first hearing. The bare Imagination of such an arbitrary and uncertain State of the World (*made and govern'd by an infinitely wise Being, and for infinitely wise and good Purposes*) is enough to confound any thoughtful Mind.

And therefore, I say, tho we don't assure our selves in these Cases, by the same Media, that we do in strict Demonstration; yet we have reason to depend upon the Truth of them, with as much compofure and steddiness of Mind as we should do, if they were fairly demonstrated to us: And accordingly 'tis Matter of Fact, that we do so in the common Affairs of Life.

## P R O P. X.

**W**HERE any sort of Proof is adapted to the Nature of all Cases, which are of one and the same kind in general; we ought to make use of, or apply the same kind of Proof, as well as to those particular Cases, which are of the highest and greatest Importance;



*tance; as to those which are of a more trivial and vulgar Nature.*

It is the specifick Difference in the Nature of things (which are the Objects of our Knowledg) that necessarily produces a proportional Difference in our Methods of proving, or knowing the Truth of those things. If they were all of one kind, we should prove Truth in all sorts of Cases by one and the same way. But as the Properties of things differ, so of course must that Order which we observe, in ascertaining our selves about the Truth of them, be various likewise. *Geometrical Truths* are evinc'd by direct Demonstration, *à Priori*; *Physical ones*, *à Posteriori*, or by Experiment; *Moral ones*, by Testimony, the Principles of Human Nature, and the Laws of the World. To each \* *Class* or Species of Truth, its own peculiar Method of Proof does belong. And all Truths of the same Class, are therefore to be evinc'd by the same sort of Principles, or by the same general Method of Proceeding. We can't have one Set of Principles, to prove Propositions of greater moment, and another to prove those which are of less. For at this rate, all Nature must be run into Confusion, and the just Order and Distinction of things be totally subverted and taken away. So that let a Proposition be of what Dignity and Consequence it will, yet if the Matter or Subject of it, be re-

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\* Λέγεται δ' ἂν ἰκανῶς εἰ καὶ τὴν ὑποκειμένην ὅλῃ διασαφηθείη; τὸ γὰρ ἀκρίβες ἔχει ὁμοίως ἐν ᾧ πᾶσι τοῖς λόγοις ἐπιζητητέον. Aristot. Ethic. ad Nicomach. Lib. 1. Cap. 1. Edit. Aurel. Allobrog. 1606.

Τὴν δ' ἀκρίβειαν τὴν μαθηματικὴν ἐκ ἐν ᾧ πᾶσι ἀπαίτητον. Id. Metaphys. Lib. 2. Cap. 3.

ducible to the same Head or Class, with the Matter or Subject of a Proposition of a slighter and more trivial Nature; 'tis certain, that we are to proceed in the Proof of the former, after the same general manner, and by the same sort of Principles, that we would proceed to prove the other by.

From hence therefore it follows,

*Coroll. 1. Moral Evidence is not to be rejected, when 'tis alledg'd for the Proof of Matter of Fact, even of the greatest Moment and Consequence possible.*

For all Matter of Fact, of which we are not assur'd by the Testimony of Sense, must needs be made out to us by Moral Proofs.

Therefore, since all Propositions of the same kind, are to be evinc'd by Principles of the same common Nature; it would be infinitely absurd, to make the Value and Importance of the Subject-matter of any Proposition, a Reason for our disowning that Moral Proof, which is produc'd to make out the Truth of it to us.

*Coroll. 2. And therefore, As we use our Reason in worldly Affairs, so we must, in those of our Salvation.* All the difference is, that we are to argue with more Care, in those Cases which depend upon Moral Evidence, if our Salvation be concern'd in them; than would be necessary for us to do, if the Question were only about some Interest or Advantage in the present World. We must consider the Evidences which are offer'd to us, with the coolest Thought, and the utmost Sagacity we can; resolving to be neither irrationally Obstinate, nor fondly Credulous and Easy; but with a just and fixed Resolution of  
Mind,

Mind, pursue the Enquiry after a fair and rational Proof, such as Creatures endow'd with Understanding and Discretion ought to expect in a Matter of great Concern,

And when we have found such Proof as this, I say, that tho even our Eternal Felicity be concern'd in the Enquiry, we ought to yield our Assent, with as much Ease and Security, as we would do in the most familiar Businessses of Human Life. For the Reason of this, I refer to the foregoing Proposition.

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P R O P. XI.

**I**N speaking of the Doubt or Suspicion we have, concerning the Truth of Testimony; we ought always to distinguish, between such a Suspicion as is founded on a bare Physical Possibility, that a Witness may impose upon us in what he testifies; and a Suspicion founded on some actual positive Cause, relating to the ill Character or Manners of that Witness, or some apparent Defect in the Testimony it self.

These are two very different kinds of Suspicion, and care ought to be taken not to confound them one with another. If a Testimony wants any of those Conditions, that Reason and universal Custom have made requisite to its Credibility; if it be obscure; if it seems inconsistent with it self; if it be contradicted by other Testimonies of more Value and Authority;

if it be deliver'd by a Person of a doubtful and suspicious Reputation, or one who has forfeited all just Pretensions to a share in the Confidence of Mankind, by known Forgery, by scandalous Credulity and Partiality, or intolerable Negligence and Carelessness in his Enquiries into Matters, and the Representations he makes of them to other People: In these and such like Cases, Suspicion of a Testimony is but just and reasonable, and all wise Men will (at least) suspend their Judgments, till the Matter can be decided by other Proofs, not liable to such Exceptions.

But when none of all these things can be alledg'd, with any face of Reason or Truth, after the most exact Scrutiny that can be made into all the Circumstances of a Case; then there remains nothing for a foundation of Suspicion, but a pure *Physical* possibility of Deception: The Nature of which, as also what regard we ought to have thereunto, the following Propositions will shew us.

## P R O P. XII.

*Concerning the Nature, and various Reasons or Foundations, of a pure Physical Possibility of Deception.*

**W**HAT I understand by this Notion of a *Physical* Possibility of Deception, amounts to no more than this, *viz.* That in a strict and abstracted Sense, or in the intrinsic Nature of things, it is not any way Absurd, Impossible or Contradictory, that a Man should be impos'd on by another.

ther, in a matter of Testimony; even tho there are no Reasons to suspect an actual Deception; nay, and strong ones, on the other hand, to believe the contrary.

Now there are various Considerations, upon which this *Physical* Possibility of Deception is founded: some of them (I must needs say) plainly ridiculous; yet however, such as ought to be mention'd amongst the rest, that it may the better appear, in how narrow a compass this Notion (taken even in *Theory*) does lie, when a Man has par'd off all that is ludicrous and foolish.

The Grounds of it, as I conceive, may be reduc'd to these Heads.

*That it is not Physically impossible, that he whom I take to be a Man of Vertue, by the fair and florid Character he appears with in the World, may secretly be vicious and insincere; and notwithstanding, for all that I know, form a Design to abuse me.*

'Tis not impossible, that he should be misinform'd and abus'd himself, and so cheat me, tho without Design. *Falsum dicere*, and *Mentiri*, are two different things; for tho in both Cases, a Man is abus'd with Falshood instead of Truth, yet in the latter Case, he is abus'd with wicked Purpose and Contrivance.

Again, *It is not simply impossible, that a Man by mere Negligence, Heedlesness, and Inattention to what he says himself, may accidentally give a wrong account of things.* This is not so strange as another Case is, which notwithstanding is known to be Matter of Fact in the World, viz. *That some People, by a long Habit and Custom of telling Untruths, grow to such a Degree of Insensibility, that they do not know when they speak true, and when they do not.*



Lastly, *It is not Physically impossible, that at the very Moment I am going to receive an Information, from a Person whose Judgment and Integrity I have not the least doubt of; he may be struck with some secret Distemper, that may alter the whole Scheme of his Thoughts, and make him tell me a thing quite different from the Truth, and what he intended otherwise to do.* He may grow suddenly and insensibly Mad or Enthusiastical; or some unlucky turn may be given to his Animal Spirits; or the whole Texture of his Brain may be alter'd in a Moment; or a thousand other Accidents may happen, which I am no more aware of, than I am fearful of being impos'd upon, by means of the Effects of them. Nor do I believe there are any People, who live in apprehensions of being deceiv'd by the Reports of other Men, upon the account of any such odd Changes as these are, which may possibly intervene.

However, as these and all the foremention'd Cases, must be own'd to be in themselves *Physically* possible; so they are in that sense equally possible with respect to all Men, of what Characters soever. There is as much intrinsic Natural Possibility, that a Man of a very fair Reputation should deceive and act a fraudulent part, or rave and grow whimsical; as that one of no Reputation, or of a very bad one, should do so. For all Men as Creatures, are equally defectible.

But then, 'tis as certain, on the other hand, that there are some Considerations to be drawn from the different Characters of Men, in conjunction with other collateral Circumstances; which tho they cannot diminish the *Physical* Possibility of Deception it self, yet they vastly diminish

minish our Apprehensions of it, and make it just and necessary for us, to have either no regard to it at all, or that which is equivalent to none.

If the Person who testifies a thing, be one whose Character I have just Reasons to suspect, or know that it is very bad; then besides a *Physical Possibility*, there is in this Case also, a *Moral Probability* of my Deception: And if there should be over and above, any particular Reasons inducing me to believe it may be the Interest of this Person to deceive me; then will this Probability be heightned in the Proportion compounded of those Reasons, and the just Suspicions I have concerning his Integrity.

But if, on the other hand, I have good Reasons to conclude, he thinks it his Interest not to deceive me; then I have no more Moral Probability of Deception in the Case, than that which is in proportion to my just doubts of his Sincerity, founded upon the ill Reputation of the Man.

If I am not appriz'd of any thing, that on the one hand tends to the Prejudice of the Testifier's Character, nor on the other hand, to the Advantage of it; but the Case be so, that I am in a perfect *Equilibrium* or Indifferency, as to any Notions either of his Sincerity, or the contrary: Then (unless the Consideration of other collateral Circumstances intervene) I have no more than only a pure *Physical Possibility* of Deception.

But if any of those Reasons or Circumstances are superadded; then some degrees of Moral Probability, either of my being deceiv'd, or not being so, will be added to the aforesaid *Physical Possibility* of Deception, to render the Case proportionally more or less doubtful. But

But farther, 'tis far from being impossible in this Case (and I will say, even in the former too) that the *Momentum* of the other Circumstances, may so far exceed that Circumstance of my Ignorance of a good Character, or Knowledge of a bad one, with respect to a Person who testifies a Matter of Fact; that I may have a sufficient Degree of *Moral Certainty*, that I am not impos'd on, notwithstanding the *Physical Possibility* that I may be so.

If the Person who avouches a thing for Truth, be a Man of known Reputation for Prudence and Integrity; one who has not only never been attack'd in his Character upon that score, but has also had every one's good Word and Applause, for all those Vertues which recommend a Man as fit to be trusted and depended upon; then here is a high degree of *Moral Probability*, that I am not deceiv'd: As much more, than there is in the two last Cases; as a Character of bright Vertue is superior to no Character at all, or to a despicable and vicious one.

But if other strengthning collateral Reasons and Circumstances, are brought in over and above; I may have in such a Case, all the Degrees of *Moral Certainty* that can be attain'd, to secure me that I am not deceiv'd.

For tho (if all other Circumstances were alike) it might still make more for my Security, if the Testifier were a Person, of whose Wisdom and Veracity, I had had actual Experience my self on many Occasions; tho I say, this may be thought a better Security than if I were only satisfy'd of it by other Mens Experiences, which support his good Character; yet 'tis very possible for a Case to be so circumstantiated, that other Considerations may over-balance even  
this

this Advantage, and leave me under a more compleat degree of Moral Certainty, that I am not deceiv'd, than if I had had ever so much *personal Experience* of his Honesty and Prudence, without the concurrence of those other Circumstances. And that this is so, would be fairly demonstrable, should a Man enter upon a particular Discussion of the Circumstances, which are incident to Cases of this Nature. However, from what has been said, we may judg, *how this Physical Possibility of Deception, according to the variety of Cases that happen, is attended with Considerations of a Moral Nature, which tend to alter the Momentum of it, with respect to us.*

And thus much may suffice, for a more general and abstracted Consideration of that Principle.

I shall now proceed to consider it, in a more immediate relation to the World and Human Affairs.

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### P R O P. XIII.

**A** Bare Physical Possibility of Deception, in the Case of Testimonies alledg'd, for the Proof of Matter of Fact, is not (in the nature of things) a just and rational Ground, for any such Suspicion concerning the Truth of that Matter of Fact, as should at all influence Mankind in their practice, with respect thereunto.

By influencing the Practice of Mankind, I mean, its being the Occasion of their doing, or forbearing to do, what they would not have done,

done, or would not have forbore doing, provided they had believ'd that thing to be true.

Now the Reason of this Proposition is apparent.

Because it can never be just and rational, for Men to proceed upon a Principle, the genuine Consequences of which would be destructive of the Interests of Mankind, and introduce unavoidable Confusion all the World over.

But now this would be the Case, if Men were to be influenc'd in their Practice by this Principle of a *Physical* Possibility of being deceiv'd in Matters of Testimony.

For as there is no Human Testimony whatsoever, but what may possibly (in this Sense of Possibility) be deceitful; so all Human Testimony would be equally affected by this natural Possibility of its being deceitful. Because the foundation of it lying in the Defectibility of Human Nature, 'tis evident, not only that there can be no possible Cure for it, but also that it is such a Distemper as admits of no Degrees; the best and wisest of Men being equally defectible, with the rest of Mankind:

From hence it follows, *That whatever Informations Men receive by Testimony, they must not suffer themselves to be influenc'd in their Actions thereby.* For if they are either encourag'd to act, or are deter'd from acting by any such Motive; then they are not influenc'd in their Practice by a *Physical* Possibility of Deception; which is contrary to the *Hypothesis*.

Now if this Conclusion be notoriously False and Absurd, as we shall hereafter see it is; then (by PROP. VI. and *Corolls.*) the Truth of the present Proposition is sufficiently made out.

Coroll;



Coroll. 1. *When therefore the Truth of Testimony is call'd in question, or the Belief of it is scrupled, upon the account of a pure Physical Possibility of Deception; Men are led in such a Case, by an arbitrary Irrational Principle, which owes its rise intirely to their own Imaginations, as being the Result of some Notions or Suppositions, which according to Nature and Truth ought not to be made.*

Coroll. 2. *And therefore likewise, all pretended Estimations of the Doubtfulness of Testimony, upon this Principle, are no more than mere Fiction and Hypothesis.*

For the Question that is to be put here, is very short and plain.

*Is this Notion, of a Physical Possibility, of being impos'd on in Matters of Testimony, a sufficient ground to proceed upon in Practice; or is it not?*

If you say it is, then stand by the genuine Consequences of it, which have been urg'd in the Proof of the Proposition.

If it be not, then it is but a Notion, and a vain and idle one too.

The end of Testimony is some Use or Service, with respect to the Conduct of our Actions, or some Management of our Affairs in Life. Now if it be demonstrable, by all the Laws of right Reason, that this Principle cannot or must not be extended to Practice; then 'tis demonstrable, that it serves no real End, or is to no real Purpose, except that of filling up some room in a Man's Head, perhaps to his Prejudice, by keeping out other Notions that are better.

And I believe, I may venture to conclude, that it has been demonstrated, *that Men are not to govern themselves by this Principle.* However,  
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for a more abundant Confirmation of it, I shall add the following *Scholium*.

*Schol.* 'Tis plain, from constant Experience; in the ordinary Transactions and Businesses of Life; that Men actually overlook this Physical Possibility of Deception, and have no manner of regard to it. And in innumerable Cases, they are likewise compell'd to do so, by invincible Necessity. From whence, we may argue again after this manner.

That could never possibly be intended, for a Principle to guide Men in their Actions and Judgments of things; which (by the very Constitution and Laws of the World) they are inevitably constrain'd to have no regard to.

But the Case lies thus, with respect to a pure Physical Possibility of Deception, in Matters of Testimony.

Therefore, &c.

#### P R O P. XIV.

THOSE prudential Considerations, upon which Men sometimes proceed in the World, in order to their better Security from Dangers and Inconveniences; will by no means infer a Necessity that they should be guided by this Principle, of a pure Physical Possibility of Deception; or prove that they actually are so.

I have added this Proposition, for no other End, than only to prevent the mistaken Consequences,

quences, which some People may be ready to draw, from the Observations which may be made of Mens Conduct, in some particular Cases that occur in worldly Affairs and Concerns. They see, for example, *That under the most promising Circumstances, of Care and Assurance from other People; Men will however, use their own Hands, and Eyes, and Ears, as far as they can possibly; and tho they employ their most intimate Friends and Confidants, yet seem for all that, to distrust them, in spite of all the good Opinion, which they themselves, and the World in general, have of their Vertues.*

Now supposing all this to be true, what Inference is to be made from thence?

You will say perhaps; Why therefore it follows, *That Men do sometimes guide themselves by this Principle of a Physical Possibility of Deception.*

I answer; I shall presently shew, *That it is manifestly from other Causes, and not from this, that all these Effects do proceed.* But suppose I allow that it is from *this*, what follows upon that?

If some Men do actually proceed by this Principle, will that make it a Rule to the rest of Mankind? Will their Practice warrant it to be just and rational, in opposition to a Demonstration, which shews, *That it tends directly and immediately, to the Confusion of the whole World?*

This is certain, *That no particular Practice can be just and warrantable, which if it became general, would introduce universal Ruin and Disorder.*

For what Obligation lies upon Men, to avoid any End which is fatal and pernicious; the same lies upon them, to avoid all the Steps and Means that naturally lead to that End.

Now,

Now, what Right or Reason you have to govern your self by this Principle, the same Right has any other Man to do so likewise: And the same Right have all Mankind in general; who may therefore as reasonably conclude, they ought to act thus as well as you.

Therefore, this way of proceeding has a direct and natural Tendency, to destroy the Order and happy State of the whole World.

And therefore, Men are bound to abstain from it.

And consequently, all that follows from the supposition, that some Men do otherwise, is, *that they act unjustly and irrationally.*

But the true State of the Case lies here.

Men use Precautions to guard themselves, notwithstanding all the Securities which they may seem to have, from the Vigilance, Care and Fidelity of other Persons; not from the pure *Physical* Possibility of their being betray'd and impos'd upon: but either because their own *Industry and Personal Management*, are sometimes absolutely necessary, and more effectual, in order to the obtaining of their Ends, than the endeavours of other Men, would be alone without them; or else because they have not so perfect an Opinion, of the *Sincerity and Disinterestedness* of those they are to rely on, as to think it fit to resign themselves intirely to their Care; whatever good Character they may compliment them with, in their publick Talk and Address.

Nor indeed are Men to be blam'd for this Wariness, provided it be kept within the Bounds of Prudence and Decency; since the Wickedness of Mankind has made some Degree of it very necessary, in order to our better going thro the World.

But

But then, what is really the Effect of this Cause, we must not attribute to another; and call that a pure *Physical Possibility* of Deception, which is indeed the mere Effect of our *not sufficiently abstracting, from the Faults and Vices of our Fellow-Creatures*. Men who have been us'd to see, and have much consider'd, the many ill Practices which are too common in the World, and it may be, have had a hand in them too; may by so doing, fix a Notion in their Minds, of a general Probability of being deceiv'd by every body. Nay, we know 'tis a fundamental Principle with some, *That all Men are Knaves and Cheats, or would be so if they could; and that therefore, no Man is to be trusted, or believ'd to be Honest, any farther than he is made to be so, with good watching and looking to.*

Whether the Gentlemen who are of this Opinion, do leave *themselves* out, when they give such a Description of Mankind, or no; is what I dare not say.

If they do, why may not other People be Honest as well as they?

If they do not; then their Testimony is bad: We are not to take their Word, because (by their own *Hypothesis*) they design to impose upon us.

However, upon these Considerations, which I have here offer'd, I think it very evident, *That there is nothing in all the common Practice of Mankind, that can with any shew of Reason be alledg'd, in defence of their acting upon this Principle, of a pure Physical Possibility of Deception.*



## P R O P. XV.

**W**HEN we speak concerning the decrease of the Credibility of Testimony (whether Oral or Written) we ought to distinguish those Causes of it, which have their Rise in our own Minds and Notions; from those which are founded on the Nature and Circumstances of things without us.

The Credibility of a Testimony, is then really diminish'd, when it is (by any means whatsoever) robb'd or depriv'd of any of those Circumstances, which once it was attended with, and which all together concur'd to the giving of it such a Degree of Authority and Credit amongst Men, as was proportional to the intrinsic Value and Momentum of those Circumstances.

What these Circumstances are, may (partly at least) be known from PROP. XI. and therefore I shall not repeat them in this place. All that I say here, is, *That no Testimony is really and in the Nature of things, render'd less credible, by any other Cause; than the loss or want of some of those Conditions, which first made it (rationally) credible in such or such a degree.* 'Tis this alone that is sufficient to make it, a less fit or proper Object of any Man's Belief: For that is what I mean, by its being really, or in the Nature of things, less credible than before. And therefore, the just and real Decrease of the Credibility of Testimony, will always be proportional,

tional, to the Loss, or Diminution of the Momentum of these Circumstances. So that where they continue as they were, the Credibility of that Testimony, is not really diminish'd. But then, as there is a great deal of difference between the Credibility of Testimony, consider'd with respect to the *just intrinsic Causes and Reasons of that Credibility*; and with respect to the *Notions and Apprehensions of the Person*, to whom that Testimony is propos'd; so there is as great a difference between the Decrease of the Credibility of Testimony, in these two Respects.

A Testimony may be less credible, in the Thoughts and Opinion of a Man, that considers it; when at the same time (in the Nature of things) it is not become at all, a less fit and proper Object of Belief; as having still, all the same Qualifications and Conditions, which once gave it the Stamp, of such a Degree of rational Credibility amongst Men.

This may arise from several Causes, *which lying all within our selves*, we our selves are responsible for all the Consequences of it, as far forth as we have contributed to it, by any sort of irrational Management. If we make a Testimony less credible to our selves, by any wrong Notions or *Hypotheses*, by slight and superficial Consideration, or neglect and disregard of any of the material Circumstances of it; the Blame of this redounds to our selves, and it would be absurd for us to cry out in such a Case, *that the Credibility of this Testimony, is almost dwindled away.*

And therefore, I say, we ought in these Matters, to distinguish very nicely, what is real and true in the Nature of things abroad, from

what is the mere Effect of our own unjust and partial Reasonings.

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## P R O P. XVI.

**T**HERE is no Decrease of the Probability or Credibility of Testimony, deliver'd by faithful, careful, and knowing Witnesses; tho propagated through a Series of Ages, ever so far continu'd.

By the foregoing PROP. XV. a Testimony continues equally credible, when it is transmitted with all those Circumstances and Conditions, which first procur'd it such a degree of Credit amongst Men, as was proportional to the intrinsic Value of those Conditions.

By the *Hypothesis*, the Testimony is transmitted by such Witnesses, as are every way well qualify'd; viz. able to determine the just Circumstances and Conditions of a Testimony; honest, to represent them fairly, when so determin'd; and diligent and careful, to make all necessary Enquiries in order hereto.

Therefore it is transmitted intire and compleat, as to all the intrinsically necessary Conditions of its Credibility.

Therefore 'tis (at least) still equally credible.

Coroll. 1. All such Calculations therefore, are utterly to be rejected, which pretend to establish and determine the decreasing Credibility of Testimony, in general; without distinguishing Cases, as they ought

ought to be distinguish'd, according to the Tenor of this, and the foregoing Proposition.

Persons would do well, when they talk of the vanishing Credibility of Testimony, to tell whether they mean it is become less credible in *it self* (that is, really less deserving of Credit and Belief) or only less credible in *the Notions* of the Person, to whom that Testimony is propos'd, or by whom it is consider'd.

I allow, a Man may make an *Hypothesis*, and calculate *ad Infinitum* upon it: but then, if that *Hypothesis* be a wrong one, his Calculations will be all perfectly chimerical; how just a dependance soever there may be of one Step upon another.

Now there is no *Hypothesis*, in the Nature of things, upon which the decreasing Credibility of Testimony, can be justly and truly calculated; but that of the Diminution of Loss, of some of those Circumstances, which first gave it such or such a Degree of Credibility.

And this Consideration will always terminate in that other, of the Truth and Abilities of the Witnesses.

And therefore, I think, it fairly follows, *that no Calculation of the Decrease of the Credibility of Testimony, wherein at least, a Man pretends to talk to the World of Realities, and not of the mere Fictions of his own Brain, can ever proceed upon any other Principle, than that of the Characters and Qualifications of the Witnesses.*

Upon which account, all those Calculations in particular, which go upon a *Physical* Possibility of Deception, are Calculations of pure Whimfies and Chimeras; the very Foundation of them being totally wrong, and that which never did, nor can affect Mankind: as has been

expresly shewn, at PROP. XIII. and its Corollaries.

Coroll. 2. *As far as the Credibility of any Matter of Fact, depends upon pure Testimony; those who live at remotest Distances of Time, may have the same Evidence of the Truth of it, with those Persons, who receiv'd the Testimony first of all, or who liv'd the nearest to the Time, wherein the thing was said to be done.*

Schol. 1. *What has here been prov'd directly, is abundantly confirm'd by the common Notions and Experience of Mankind; which therefore may be fitly urg'd, as a plain Demonstration à Posteriori, of the same Truth.*

A Matter of Fact, which has once had such Evidence, as Custom and common Consent have determin'd to be reasonable, and sufficient to recommend it as a proper Object of Belief; does not become less credible to remoter Ages (for that Reason that they are more remote) than it was to the Ages which approach'd more nearly, to the Time when it was said to be transacted.

We, for example, do not now less firmly believe all those Actions of *Alexander, Hannibal, Pompey, Casar, &c.* (which ever were believ'd by any learned and wise Men in the World) than those in the last Age did believe them; nor had they any more doubt about them, than the Age before them; nor that Age, than the foregoing one, &c. For there never were any Symptoms of such a Distrust arising amongst Men. We hear no body complain of a *Decay* of Evidence; no body wishing, that they had liv'd several Ages before, that they might have  
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had more or better Proof, that *Darius* was beat in several Battles by *Alexander*, that *Hannibal* was intirely routed by *Scipio*, or *Pompey* by *Julius Caesar*. All Men believe the *Authors*, that have committed the Stories of these Events to Writing; with the same Ease and Satisfaction of Mind, that they did for several Ages ago: And therefore, all Men tell the Stories of these great Events with the same Confidence. We instruct our Youth in the Knowledg of these things, without putting any Suspicions into them, of the decreasing Probability of the Truth of what we teach them. And tho we live in Places and Times, so very remote from the true Scenes and Originals of these Affairs; yet we blush no more than our Forefathers did, when we revive the *Histories* of such Events, and publish *fresh Editions* of them to the World. We do it without the least Caution or Scruple, upon the score of the Age wherein we live; and never tell Mankind, that their Belief ought to be (in some proportion) reciprocal, to the Length of Time, that has pass'd, since the things were said to be done.

Whereas, to deal fairly and ingenuously with the World, this is what we ought to do, if we were possess'd with any such Notions ourselves. We ought to pass Sentence upon all the Authors we have, according to the several Ages in which they liv'd and writ: Declaring which are still in *full force*, which upon the *Declension*, and which *quite gone*; their Credibility being irrecoverably lost, by the excessive Length of the Time since they wrote. For in short, either the Credibility of History conduces to the good Impressions, it was design'd to make on the Minds of Men; or it does not.

If it does not, then Histories may still be read with as much profit; tho the Probability of their being true, be intirely vanish'd: and consequently, we need not stifle the matter, upon the score of any Damage accruing to Mankind thereby.

If it does, then since the Notion of decreasing Credibility cuts off all the old History at once, and sets it upon the same foot with common Romances; we are bound to tell People plainly, that Time and Pains ought never to be wasted in the Study of Antiquity; because, by the *Hypothesis*, it follows, *That no good or valuable End can ever be obtain'd thereby.*

*Schol. 2.* It will be farther useful to consider here, *the Difference between real Evidence, or the just and true Grounds for the Belief of an History, at any time; and the sensible Impression, or Influence which that History may have, or make upon Mens Minds.* I make no doubt, but the sensible Impression, or the Effects of Matter of Fact, do wear off and abate, in proportion to the distance of Time. As the Fate of *Carthage*, or the Result of the Contest between *Anthony* and *Octavius*, about the Empire of the World, were undoubtedly more hotly and generally discours'd in all Countries, at the latter end of the same Age, or one or two Ages after; than they are now in our Time: and touch'd the Passions of Men proportionally more. But the *Romans* now at this Day (or any other learned Nation besides) are not less certain of the Truth of these Events; than any of their or our Ancestors were, who liv'd a thousand Years ago. *Evidence* is one thing, and *Affection* or *Concern* quite another: However, 'tis easy for People to mix them

them together, and so run into Mistakes. We are apt to think our selves surest of those things, which impress us the most feelingly; as all those do, which lie nearest to us, either in *Time or Place*. On the other hand, we tell our selves, that things transacted a great way off, or many Centuries ago, are of little Importance to us, at so vast a remove from them; by which means it comes to pass, that we make but cold and careless Reflections upon them, and neglect many things that tend to clear up the Evidence of them to us, or convince us that they were really true. And this Inattention, by degrees, throws a kind of a Mist upon the things themselves, and makes them appear something obscure, and therefore doubtful to us (as all things must of necessity do, the Reasons of which, we never, or but seldom consider) till at last we come to either down-right Uncertainty about the Reality of them, or else to think, that we want some Degrees of Evidence in our Time, which the People in former Ages might fairly pretend to. And I make no doubt, but this is one main thing, at the bottom of that Notion (which some People have) of *decreasing Evidence or Credibility*.

Schol. 3. To what has been hitherto said, we may also add this, *viz. That tho we cannot say in a strict and proper sense, that the Credibility of Testimony really increases, or becomes more than it was, at any given time, (unless new Circumstances and Conditions are still superadded to it) yet we may safely assert, That with the Increase of Time, Reasons may also increase, to confirm Mankind more in their Belief, and to assure them farther of the Truth of that Testimony. So that by Consequence,*  
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an Evidence may be stronger to some, who are more remote in Time, from the first Testimony concerning a Matter of Fact; than to others, who liv'd nearer thereto.

For tho every Man is to use his own Reason, in judging of the real Credibility of a Testimony; yet 'tis a Consideration of no little moment, *That it has stood the Trials and Examinations of many Ages, successively; and that vast numbers of Men, of Candor and Integrity, of the politest Parts, the greatest Sagacity, and equal Learning and Application, have, after the profoundest Search and Enquiry into the Matter, unanimously set their Hands to it, and voted it a rationally credible Testimony, according to all the Laws of Reasoning (in these Cases) ever us'd amongst Mankind.* Now this is the Advantage, which succeeding Generations have, above those which went before. 'Tis granted, the Truth of the thing is apparent to them, upon the intrinsic Merit of the Proof that is offer'd for it: But then, they conclude that Truth, in consort with so many Thousands that have argu'd upon the very same Premises, and drawn exactly the same Conclusion, before their Days; that 'twould be prodigious and next to impossible, that such multitudes of different Times, Countries, Educations, Tempers and Prejudices, and Men that knew how to argue rightly too, should all fall into the very same Paralogism, and blunder precisely after the same manner. Now where a Case of Testimony is thus circumstantiated, I say, it adds a considerable Value and Force to the Proof it self; *in that it gives a Prospect of strange unaccountable Difficulties that attend the Supposition of its not being a just and rational one.*

For here a Man is presently lost in the Thought, when he attempts to reconcile these difficulties to the common Notions and Sense of Mankind. How should these Men all come to join in such a Mistake? To suppose them to be ignorant, credulous, heedless, not to examine things, and argue upon them; is contrary to the *Hypothesis*. To suppose them to do it by Combination and Design, is likewise contrary to the supposition of their Candor and good Manners; and is besides, unsufferable Nonsense, when we are speaking of the different Ages and Countries of the World. What can be suppos'd then, for the reason of so universal a Blunder (if it be a Blunder) but as universal an Infatuation or Madness; that these Men were all under the Power of some malignant Charm, Planet-struck, and out of their Wits? And I think no Man can well make that supposition, without bringing himself in for a share of the same Calamity. So that I think, we may safely lay down this for a Rule, *That some Matters of Fact may be attended with such Circumstances of Evidence, that they may not only be equally, but also (all things consider'd) more credible, to those who live in remoter Ages; than to those, who only liv'd nearer to the Time wherein the things were said to be done, but were not themselves Eye-Witnesses of the same.*

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## S E C T. XXV.

**T**HUS I have shewn, in the foregoing *Propositions*, what I think necessary (with regard to our present Design) concerning the

*Four-*



*Foundation, Nature and Properties of Moral Evidence.*

This was the first thing I propos'd to do, under that Head of Argument we are now upon.

*Secondly*, I shall now enquire particularly, into the *Use and Necessity* of this sort of Evidence in the World; and shew, by the wretched and perplex'd Consequences, which follow upon the taking it away, what Obligations we lie under to submit to it, where the Conditions and Circumstances of a Case, make it fair and rational (in the Nature of the thing) for us so to do.

## S E C T. XXVI.

*First*, **W**E are all sensible, *That the Administration of Justice, and consequently the Support and Preservation of Government, depends intirely upon this kind of Evidence.*

For those that have the Power of making and executing Laws, cannot be present in all Places, to be Eye-Witnesses themselves, of the evil Actions of Offenders, or the excellent and praiseworthy Behaviour of those, who serve the Publick well. And therefore, that there may be way made for Justice to proceed, in dispensing Rewards and Punishments to Good and Bad, according to their several Merits; 'tis necessary, that other Mens Eyes should be substituted in the room of those of Legislators and Governors; who should themselves (if it were possible) survey every Place, and take account of what is done by every Person. What other Men have seen or heard, or can collect by fair and

and rational Circumstances, must be alledg'd and laid before them: And this, when done in solemn Form and Manner, is reckon'd by *all the Wisdom and Justice of Nations*, to be sufficient Evidence; even where things of the greatest Consideration do lie at stake, as the Lives and Fortunes of Men and Families. And if Testimony were not current Proof in such Cases, what a miserable Condition would the World quickly be in? How bold would Men of ill Principles make with Laws, and the Honour of the Lawgivers too? How securely would they play their mischievous Pranks, when out of the Reach of the awful Eye of Justice? All Safety and Protection were lost, and every Person and Thing expos'd to all manner of Insults and Depredations. Enemies might plot without controul, threaten high, make insolent Preparations, and bring matters at last to irretrievable Extremities; if Testimony were not a Check upon them, and other Mens Eyes and Ears did not guard the Publick. And therefore, if this sort of Evidence were to be thrown out of the World, the Consequence would not only be a final stop to the Execution of all Law and Justice; but no necessary Precautions could ever be taken, towards the warding off any Mischiefs, that either threaten'd the Publick, or were ready to disturb a Man's own private Peace and Repose. Nor could any means ever be us'd, to promote the common Welfare and Happiness, or to render our own Conditions more easy and prosperous in the World. But instead of this, all things must be suffer'd to go on, whether for better or for worse, just as they will and can of themselves, without any Care or Concern of ours. Tho God has endow'd

dow'd us with Judgment and Discretion, by which we are capable of *consulting and contriving* for our own Advantage, and providing against Events, which would render us unhappy, if they befel us; yet we are (upon this *Hypothesis*) to make no use of our Reason for these Ends and Purposes, but stand still, as if we were intirely void of such a Principle; waiting for Revolutions and Turns of things, which may be either favourable or unfortunate to us, according as it happens.

For Reason can be of no Advantage to us (in Cases of this nature) without the *Knowledg and Conversation of the World*; and the Knowledg and Conversation of the World can signify nothing, if *Moral Certainty* be taken away. Because, whatever Knowledg or Information we may gather concerning the State of the World, by our conversing with Mankind; yet if we can repose no manner of Confidence, in what we thus inform our selves of, we lose all the necessary Motives and Encouragements to Action, and consequently are not a jot the better, or the nearer to any good Purpose, for all the Notices we can get, of Men and Things in the present Life.

## S E C T. XXVII.

Secondly, **N**OR is it only the Destruction of Government in particular, but the Dissolution of all Society in general; which is an immediate and necessary Consequence, upon the taking away this sort of Evidence.

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For a mutual Confidence and Dependance of one Man upon another, is one of the great Bands which holds all Communities together, and unites the particular Members of them in the strictest Obligations one to another. And therefore, if this be taken off, so that no Trust can be repos'd, nor no Credit given, that Men may be easy and secure in so doing; then everlasting Jealousy and Suspicion must reign in all Places. Men must be every where upon their guard, looking upon all those about them, either as dangerous Enemies, watching for Opportunities to betray and ruin them; or else as such, whose Friendship and Fidelity are by no means ever to be relied on. And take it either way, the Effects will be much the same. For in such a State as this, there is no possibility of such a thing, as one *common Interest*, or a firm Conjunction of Designs and Endeavours to promote it. Because, this perfect Harmony of Temper requires Men to be free and open, and to have a just regard to each other, upon the Principles of Honour and Credit. But if they were always to live under Apprehensions, of base Cheats and Impositions from one another; and no Man could advise or act, but the rest about him must presently suspect some wicked Design at the bottom of it; as they would have all the reasons in the World to fear and hate one another, so they could not but think themselves happiest, when farthest asunder. Thus all Zeal and Concern for the Interests of the Publick, would be intirely swallow'd up by anxious Thoughts and Cares, continually working in Mens Breasts, about the Defence of themselves and their own private Fortunes. And when matters were brought to  
this

this pass, a general Disbanding of Mankind would follow thro the World. We should see *Societies* melt away into nothing; the largest and most august Bodies of Men (as well as the less and more despicable ones) confusedly dispersing and flying from one another. All *Trade and Commerce* would be at an end (as well as Honour and Distinction) amongst Men.

As Princes and Subjects, would be all upon a level; so would *Friendship* and Correspondence amongst the latter, be as impossible, as *Government* to the former.

Every Man must stand upon his own Legs, and shift for himself as well as he could; and therefore (without Consideration or Regard to any thing above or below him) attend only to the grand Business, of looking out after Shelter for himself, where he might be safe. The next Step to this (for what should hinder, when all gentle Affections were banish'd from the World?) would be open Violence and Hostility; as Opportunity should put an Advantage into any Man's Hands, who, together with superiour Strength, had Malice enough to be an Aggressor.

This sort of State, some have call'd by the Name of a *State of Nature*, and painted Men like so many Beasts of Prey, hunting and worrying one another, and committing all the barbarous Ravages that brutish Appetite and Force could be imagin'd to make them capable of. As if they had believ'd the \* *Poet* to be in good earnest

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\* Cum prorepserunt primis Animalia Terris,  
Mutum & turpe Pecus, Glandem atque Cubilia  
propter  
Unguibus & Pugnīs, dein Fustibus, atque ita porro  
Pugnabant Armis, quæ post fabricaverat Usus.



earnest, in that Picture he drew of the Primitive State of the World; and thought they were oblig'd to copy the Images of his Fiction, to compose a regular Scheme for Mankind to go by.

From hence, *Fear, Distrust*, and other hostile Passions, have been made the Causes of Mens forming themselves at first into *Societies*. That is, *The Causes of their living decently and in good Order, and having a due regard to one another, according to their several Stations and Conditions*: For that is the meaning of living together in *Society*.

A most noble Effect, to proceed from so base and vile a Cause!

However, 'tis plain enough, *That these Principles tend to the destruction of Society; and if they did prevail, would actually destroy it.*

And I must needs say, it looks something odd, *That the Rise and Origin of Society should be that very Principle, which we are sure, tends to the utter Ruin and Confusion of it.*

## S E C T. XXVIII.

Thirdly, **I** Might add, in the next place, *That many of our Civil Liberties and Privileges in the World, are so far founded upon this sort of Evidence, that without it, we could never possibly make out any Title to them; and not only*

Donec Verba, quibus Voces Sensusque notarent  
Nominaque invenêre, dehinc abstinere Bello,  
Oppida cœperunt munire, & ponere Leges, &c.

*Horat. Sat. 3.*

so, but it is by this alone (abstracting from all other kinds of Proof) that we are able to justify the Claim we lay to them, and consequently owe the Enjoyment of all the Advantages flowing from thence, intirely to this sort of Evidence.

To give full Proof of this, 'tis enough to hint those common Cases of Birth and Parentage, and Succession to Inheritances, by Will and Testament: Arguments which cannot lose their force with any wise Man, for being vulgar ones, and occurring to us every day.

I presume, it will be allow'd, That as in some Cases, Personal \* Knowledg, or the Testimony of Sense is utterly impossible, and in others, is not requir'd and insisted on by Mankind: So also, that there is no room for pure Demonstration to come in, in any of them all, neither the Demonstratio ὀπ, nor δι' ὀπ, ostensivè, nor ad absurdum; and therefore, that all our Belief and Assent in these Cases, must stand intirely upon the Basis of Moral Evidence.

The matter being so plain, I shall go no farther in the Consideration of it, but only observe two or three things, that may be infer'd from this sort of Arguments.

First, That some Matters of Fact, may be so convincingly made out by Testimony; as to leave Men under a compleat assurance of the Truth of them. Or (which is equivalent to it) That Circumstances may be so mix'd and complicated in some Cases of Testimony, that there can be no room to suspect any Fraud or Deceit; and it must be extravagantly ridiculous and absurd, to imagine things not to be, as they are represented to be.

\* ὅτι πῶς τις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἀνέστω. Hom.

Secondly,

Secondly, *What a stress is laid upon the Faith and Credit of Men, in matters of very great Importance, to the Peace and Welfare of Societies.*

For it would be easy to shew, that the Cases I have mention'd are of great Consequence to the publick Welfare; and that Uncertainty, or the want of sure and standing Proofs in these matters, would involve all Nations in Tumult and Disorder.

Thirdly, *How effectually all the Notions, of the useless and precarious Nature of Moral Evidence, are confuted by the very Constitution of the World, and the unavoidable Circumstances of Human Nature therein.*

So far, that every Man by being born, prepares full Conviction for himself, against the time that he comes to dispute the Validity of this sort of Evidence. Nor is there a step he takes in Life afterwards, wherein it is not serviceable to him, and (even while he is railing against it) does not some way or other contribute to his Comfort and Felicity here.

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## S E C T. XXIX.

Fourthly, **I** Might shew here in the last place, *How far the taking away of Moral Evidence, would (in a particular manner) affect the learned World.*

'Tis plain, that a great part of our Knowledge, and such as is very useful in Human Life, must be given up as wholly useless and insignificant to us, if matters were to be brought to this pass.

In a word, whatever can be comprehended under the general Name of History, is cut off

at once; whether that which informs us, of the Actions and Customs of Men, or of the Works of Nature; or the Bounds and Dimensions of Countries; or Celestial Observations; or the Computations of Time and Events, with whatever has been introduc'd amongst Men in order thereto.

This is all lost, as far as it depends upon the Credit and Testimony of other Men; and therefore *Geography*, *Chronology*, and a good part of *Natural History* (which are little else but a Series or Concatenation of Testimonies) become all as useless as mere Fable and Romance, and should be thrown out of our Libraries as such.

In short, no sort of Discovery, no Experiment or Observation that a Man does not make himself, or see with his own Eyes; nay, nor no demonstrable Truth neither, which a Man is not able to demonstrate himself; is ever to be admitted, or made use of, either by way of Argument in Discourse, or as a Premise in any Demonstration, in order either to Theory or Practice.

Every Man must stand upon the Basis of his own proper Knowledge, without Light and Information, without Hints and Suggestions from other Persons; being neither *Physician*, *Philosopher*, *Cosmographer*, nor *Historian*, any farther than he is beholden to pure Nature and Industry, to good Luck or Chance, or to all together. And I must say, that were matters brought to this pass, that Men were to make a Figure in the World, with those Ornaments only, which they themselves had thus fairly and legitimately acquir'd: Should every Author that has contributed to the dressing of them up, appear again upon the Stage, each to pluck off  
his

his own Feather; the Shew would be much less fine and pompous than now it is; and Multitudes who have drawn the admiring Eyes of Mankind after them, would be left in the same bare Condition, with the ridiculous Bird in the Fable.

All that I shall infer from the present Head, is this: *That since we take so many things in Cases of this Nature, for granted, and receive them as true, upon no other Proof, than the Testimony of other Men; when we meet with other things, which upon a just comparing of Circumstances, appear to be in all respects as well attested, and to have (at least) as good an Evidence, as those which we ordinarily receive, without the least Scruple; when we find all the Marks of Sincerity and Veracity, all the Agreements and Coincidences of things, that Freedom from reasonable Exceptions, and that Prospect of unanswerable Difficulties, attending the refusal of our Assent, which are the Motives that commonly determine us to yield it in these Cases: That then, I say, we ought not to reject such Testimony, but receive it, as we do other Testimony, propos'd under the like Circumstances of Evidence; or else, if we disown that on one side, to disown all on the other likewise.*

Much less should we ever make use of Testimony, in order to expose and run down the Credit of Testimony; or quote Authorities, to prove other Men Fools for depending upon them.

To cry up at one time, and explode at another, the very same sort of Argument, attended with the same Advantages, and press'd under the same Conditions; is a Practice so arbitrary and inconsistent, and shews so much Humour and Self-will; that no Man can be guilty of it, without declaring plainly, that it is not



Truth, but some other Interest that has the Ascendant over him.

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## S E C T. XXX.

**H**AVING thus finish'd what I thought necessary to be said here, concerning the *Nature and Use of Moral Evidence*; I shall now subjoin one general *Corollary*, to the whole Discourse: And then propose some few things, which (if well consider'd) may, I hope, be serviceable, as well to prevent or remove Difficulties, as to set us right in our Thoughts, and direct us in all our Enquiries into Subjects, where this sort of Evidence must be depended upon.

And with this I shall conclude the Second of those four general Heads, which I propos'd to go thro, at the Beginning of this part of the Book: *viz. The Demonstration of the obligatory Nature of an Evidence, that comes up to the Characters which were before describ'd.*

*Coroll. From what has been said, we may see how much those Men, who expose Moral Evidence as a precarious, uncertain, deceitful thing, do abuse the World by such sort of Suggestions; and what Enemies they are to the Peace and Happiness thereof.*

I take in here, all those sorts of People, who agree in the same common Design and Practice of ridiculing this kind of Evidence; how different soever the Methods may be, which they take to accomplish their End.

Some

Some (who I must confess, are the most brave and generous Adversaries of the two) use no manner of Ceremony at all in the matter; but talk openly and bluntly, and thereby put us out of all possible doubt of their meaning, and what they would be at.

They don't stick to say, in plain intelligible Language, *That these sorts of Proofs are fit for none but Fools and Bigots, to be persuaded by — That we can be sure of nothing, we take for Truth this way — And that all that we have to depend upon, is only our being told so and so, by Men who may as probably have been Knaves, and put an egregious Cheat upon us, as not.*

There are others, who go more warily to work, and make the Attack by *Queries* and *Surmises*, by little Doubts and Jealousies, started about the Uncertainty of all those Reasonings, that do not come up to strict and perfect Demonstration.

These Gentlemen, who, to be sure, are deeply concern'd for the Welfare of *Christianity*, seem to be in pain for it, when they consider, how little Credit it meets with in the World; and how slightly some People (whom they fear to be very bad Men) will talk of the Evidences that are offer'd, to recommend it to the Belief of Mankind. — *There is no doubt, but Christianity is sufficiently well prov'd — And no rational considering Man, ever offer'd to dispute the Truth of it — But — There are those, who will talk very oddly sometimes, of the Doubtfulness of Human Testimony; and intimate, as if some things were very questionable upon that score — They will not allow us to have any more, than a Peradventure, or a May-be, for the Truth of all things which rest upon Moral Proof — But alas! Infidelity and*

*Scepticism, do much prevail in this wicked Age—— And People are mighty apt to doubt, in Cases where they have not Demonstration to make them sure.*

Admirably well argu'd indeed! The *Christian Religion* is very much beholden to these Gentlemen, for their great Care, to support the Credit of it, in an Age of prevailing Scepticism and Infidelity. Such sort of Insinuations are like to do it service; or rather to instil the most inveterate Prejudices against it, into the Minds of Men, and prepare them for a more sound and thorow Institution in *Deism*.

A Man that openly raves and storms at *Religion*, calls it *Imposture and Priestcraft*, and expresses himself in all the rough Terms, commonly us'd by the less well-bred Enemies of *Christianity*; is nothing in comparison to these masquerading People, that talk modestly and calmly, and (while they seem to be speaking handsomely on the behalf of *Religion*) are trying to undermine the very Foundations of it.

The former Person fairly sounds an Alarm, threatens what he will do, and bids you beware of him. Tho he intends only to expose, yet in effect, he serves *Christianity* by his very Calumny and Reproaches: because he tells the World plainly, he has no Arguments against it, but what are of this disreputable kind; and that if he had Reasons, he would not fail to make use of them.

But the others, insinuate themselves into a Man before he is aware, work him off from his Guard, tincture and season him with the most pernicious and destructive Principles; and have in effect, run down and made all *Christianity* a Cheat; by that time a Man comes to suspect or imagine, they had any Designs against it.

For

For in short, do but artfully possess Men with a Notion of the doubtful and precarious Nature of Moral Evidence, and you may easily bring them to believe what you please, about the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. That is, *do but represent Matters to them, under false and deceitful Colours; give them crude undigested Notions, and a mere superficial Account of things; and by this means, you may make them fit to set up against the Christian Religion.* An odd way of instituting and accomplishing Men! But that this is the true State of the Case, will plainly appear upon a little Examination of it.

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## S E C T. XXXI.

**T**HE great Cry amongst these Gentlemen, is — *You can't be sure — You must needs be under miserable Uncertainties in all Cases of this Nature — &c.*

Now I would fain know, what they mean by this: for 'tis certain, that if they would but explain themselves, the Case is so obvious, that either they or we, must presently be run up to some grand Absurdity, if we stand fairly to the Argument on both sides.

*First*, Do they mean (by our not being sure) that we cannot be *Mathematically Certain*? If they do, Who ever suppos'd, or talk'd of *Mathematical Certainty* (or such sort of Certainty, as that which results from strict Demonstration) in these matters?

We say indeed, that in innumerable Cases of this kind, we have an Assurance or Satisfaction of Mind, arising from Moral Proofs, equivalent



to that which arises from perfect *Geometrical Demonstration* it self: And this is fairly demonstrable. See PROP. IX.

But I dare say, that no Man ever fancy'd, much less asserted a Certainty of the same kind, with that in *Mathematicks*; and the contrary is expressly shewn, with the Reasons of it, at *Schol.* PROP. IV.

So that if they mean this, they mean that which no body ever said or thought of; and therefore, is nothing to the purpose.

Or, *Secondly*, Do they intend (by talking thus) *that we have no solid and substantial Grounds, upon which we may safely proceed, to argue our selves into a Belief of the Truth of things?* Do they mean, *That there are no valuable Considerations in the Nature of things, which are sufficient to make it strictly just, rational, and necessary for us, to yield the Assent of our Minds, in such Cases as these are?*

If this be what they would have; I must needs say, that I think they are oblig'd, by all the Rules of Honour and good Breeding in the World, to ask pardon of those Persons (on whom they impose such absurd and manifest Untruths) for complimenting of them, with so little Sense and Understanding.

For every Man that has any Degree of either, is able to shew, that this is wrong in Fact, from his own Knowledge of the World. And if these Gentlemen must needs divert themselves, with making unjust Representations of things; one would think, they might have chosen their Subject a little more prudently, and not have fix'd upon one, which lies so much within the reach of all common Observation and Experience, which may be produc'd to confute them  
every



every Day, nay, and by which, they are eternally confuting and contradicting themselves.

So that whatever they mean (since it will be hard to pitch upon any meaning, that will not be reducible to one of these two Heads) I think I may fairly conclude, *that it is either manifestly wrong in point of Fact, or else nothing to the purpose.* And this being the true and impartial State of the Case, they may (if they think it wise so to do) go on with the cry of—*You cannot be sure.*

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## S E C T. XXXII.

**T**O conclude, I would desire these Gentlemen to consider the following Argumentation.

We can be sure, *That Order and Government, Society and Commerce, must be preserv'd in the World, as long as there is a Race of reasonable and sociable Creatures therein.* And therefore, *That something must be credible between Man and Man.*

From hence we can be sure, *That there must necessarily be some just Marks of that Credibility.*

And therefore, *That we are bound to have a due regard to them, wherever they appear.*

Not only, because it is equitable and rational, in the Nature of the thing so to do; but also, because intolerable Inconveniences would certainly follow, upon our disowning the Truth of things, the Evidences for which come up to those Characters.

From hence we may be sure (if we are not antecedently resolv'd to live in Doubt and Uncertainty) *That we are oblig'd, by all the Laws of Human*

*Human Nature, and the World wherein we live, to yield the Assent of our Minds in all such Cases, where we should infallibly run upon some of those foremention'd Inconveniences, provided we refuse it.*

And because the Author of Nature has not made the World after such a manner, nor cannot permit that we should be deceiv'd, in Cases where it is made strictly just and rational for us to yield the Assent of our Minds: Therefore, we can be sure, *That in all Cases (especially in those of great Importance) where the Evidences come up to those Conditions; we shall not be deceiv'd, in assenting to the Truth of things, as made out to us by those Evidences.*

And from all this, we can fairly conclude, *That the Foundations of Moral Evidence (and consequently the Reasons of our dependance upon it) are not precarious and uncertain, but most securely laid, in the Nature and Order of things.*  
Q. E. D.

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## S E C T. XXXIII.

**L**ET me now add some few *Rules or Directions*, to Persons of sincere and honest Minds, in order to the inforcing what has been said upon this Subject, and the better preparing of them to defend it, against whatever they may hear at any time advanc'd, by way of opposition to it.

First, *Remember that there is no Argument ever to be drawn, against the Goodness and Sufficiency of Moral Proofs, from the Consideration of that Corruption, Treachery, and Falshood, which is so common in this degenerate World.* And therefore, if  
this

this should be insisted on, you may safely allow the Objection to be true (*viz. That there is, and always has been, abundance of Fraud and Deceit in the World*) and at the same time, deny the Consequences that are infer'd from it; if they are carry'd so far, as to conclude generally, *That Moral Evidence is fallacious, and ought not to be depended upon.*

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## S E C T. XXXIV.

Secondly, **Y**OU should not be startled, when you hear People tell you, *That Moral Proofs do not shew you, that things cannot possibly be otherwise than they are prov'd to be; or that they do not shew, that things must necessarily be so as these Proofs do make them out to be; and consequently, that you can have no satisfaction in depending upon them.*

For this is manifestly a Paralogism. It does not follow, that a Proof which does not shew a Man, that things cannot possibly be otherwise (or must in the strictest Sense, necessarily be so as they are represented to be) must therefore leave him under Doubt and Uncertainty.

It is not true; it is contrary to plain Fact and Experience in ten thousand Cases, that we are conscious of our selves. And therefore, here I refer to PROP. VII. and VIII. with the *Colluraries* of the same, for farther satisfaction.

And because this is a Point of great Importance, and such as, if a Man thought seriously and deliberately of, he would (I dare be confident) presently see thro, and demonstrate the Shallowness of the most (seemingly) frightful Objec-

Objections against *Moral Evidence* : I shall therefore (in pursuance of what I have deliver'd at Coroll. 2. of PROP. VII.) add this farther Direction.

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## S E C T. XXXV.

Thirdly, **I**N all your Arguings for, or hearing other Peoples Arguings against *Moral Evidence* ; be sure to keep to that, which in reality is your true Scope and Design, and the Point you ought mainly to be concern'd about. Remember that your great End in making use of this sort of Proofs, is, to be well satisfy'd, of the Truth and Reality of things ; to know that they are so in Fact, as they are represented to be, or that they are not otherwise.

But to consider, whether it be impossible or contradictory, that they should be otherwise, or possible that they should not be at all ; this is perfectly foreign to the true Scope and Design of all these Enquiries. And this is plainly demonstrable from hence, *That the End of Moral Evidence being not pure Speculation, but Practice, or the better qualifying our selves, to regulate and conduct our Actions in Life ; this End may be perfectly attain'd, by pursuing the Enquiry, about the Truth and Reality of things.* For when we are satisfy'd, upon strictly just and rational Grounds, that they are either actually so, or not so as they are represented to be ; then we have all the Information that is necessary, in order to the Management of our Affairs ; and know how we are to proceed, whether by doing this or the other thing, or by letting it alone. But it would

would be of no manner of Use or Service to us, with respect to Practice (even if the Nature of these Cases would bear it) to have such Proof of the Truth of things, as should convince us at the same time, that it was strictly impossible they should be otherwise. For the Ground of all our Actions, being the Consideration of the Importance or Concern, which things are of, to our Welfare and Happiness; 'tis manifest, that this Circumstance, of the absolute Possibility or Impossibility, of their not being or being otherwise than these Proofs represent them to us; does not at all tend to heighten our Sense of the Value and Importance of them, provided we have but convincing Proof, *that they really are.*

Therefore, this Circumstance is of no moment at all, with respect to Practice.

And consequently, the want of it, is not a Foundation for any just Objection against *Moral Evidence.*

## S E C T. XXXVI.

*Quest.* SINCE 'tis a Point of such Importance, to avoid being deceiv'd, in many Cases where Men are to trust intirely to Moral Evidence; *We desire to know, what Method a Man ought to observe, that he may be sure to distinguish the Right from the Wrong, and form such a Judgment of an Evidence propos'd, as is necessary, in order to the making of a just and true Conclusion?*

*Answ.* It is indeed a matter of very great Importance, to judg and to go right in some Cases of this Nature; for 'tis plain, *That no less a thing*



*thing than our Salvation it self, depends upon the forming of a right Judgment, in a single Case of Moral Evidence.*

I shall therefore, here propose some few Rules and Directions, which if Men would carefully put in practice, I make no doubt to assure them, *That their Endeavours will be attended with the desired Success.*

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## S E C T. XXXVII.

**A**ND, *First*, I think the first step of all should be, *An humble and sincere Address to the great Author of your Being, for his favourable Assistance and Concurrence with you.*

In all your Enquiries after Truth, but especially in those which are of great Concern, it is but reasonable, that you should acknowledg Him who is Truth it self, and the Fountain of Truth to all intelligent Creatures. It is by the kindly Influences of his Providence, that your Faculties are preserv'd, in a just degree of Strength and Vigour; and that you are capable of exerting them to any good Purpose, in any of the Affairs or Businesses of Life. And if it be your Duty at all times to acknowledg this, to praise him for his Goodness, and implore the Continuance of it to you; how much more devoutly should you seek his Assistance, when you are going to pursue an Enquiry, in the Issues of which your everlasting Felicity is concern'd? In short, this is a Duty of *Natural Religion*; so that those who do not believe the Gospel by their own Principles, need not scruple the Practice of it.

SECT.

## S E C T. XXXVIII.

Secondly, **P***ropose it to your selves, as the only Design of all your Reasonings and Enquiries, to find out Truth.*

Because, if you have any other End in View, it will infallibly so bias you in all your Proceedings, that you will not be able to think, argue, or judg, in that free and impartial manner that you ought to do, and would otherwise do, if you were wholly disinterested, and had only propos'd to your selves, to find out the Truth of the matter.

Besides (unless you think it a piece of needless Ceremony, to ask the Direction of Heaven, in a Case of great Moment) you cannot, without horrid Hypocrisy, desire God to assist you in your Business, where 'tis not your Design to be truly and rightly inform'd.

## S E C T. XXXIX.

Thirdly, **I***N pursuance of this great Design, of finding out Truth (which is what all Men of Wisdom and Sincerity will have in their Eye) Endeavour as much as in you lies, to divest your selves of all those Prejudices, which any Notions or Opinions, contrary to that which lies before you to be examin'd, may very probably have fix'd in your Minds.*

That is, abstract from them so far, that they may have no Influence upon you in the Inquiry you  
O are

are making, and the Conclusion you are afterwards to draw, from your Reasonings upon the Case in hand.

Now this is very possible for you to do.

For 'tis in your Power to govern your Fancies, and let genuine Reason take place.

You can (if you will) look upon things without those false Colours, that the Imagination is too apt to disguise them withal, and which represent them to you, as very much different from what they really are in themselves. I confess, it is a work of Time and Labour, for Men to *conquer their Prejudices thorowly*; but to prevent their governing and swaying the Mind, while a matter of the highest Importance is under Examination, is what every Man may do, that will exert himself, and use his Liberty well.

## S E C T. XL.

Fourthly, **E***xamine all the Circumstances of the Case propos'd, in the most careful and deliberate manner that you can.*

Do not let your Thoughts be employ'd upon things of little moment, while you pass by those that deserve your best Attention, and most serious Regard. Select all those Circumstances, and those only, which are material with respect to the Conclusion; and when you have done so, give them their due Force and Weight: And let them influence your Understanding according to what they plainly appear to be (in your most abstracted Views of them) and not as they tend to carry the Conclusion, either this or that particular way, whether for or  
against

against the Notions you have hitherto entertain'd.

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## S E C T. XLI.

*Fifthly,* **H**AVING thus accurately weigh'd and consider'd the Circumstances of the Case, *Make such Inferences from them, as your soberest Reason, without any Art or Management, does it self freely prompt you to make.*

Conclude in such a manner, as to leave your Mind truly serene and compos'd under what you have done; and that upon cool Reflections, it may tell you afterwards, you have drawn a *Conclusion, reasonable and fit to stand by.*

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## S E C T. XLII.

*Lastly,* **Y**OU ought to make and keep to this Resolution, *Not to drop the Enquiry till you have brought it to some determinate Issue; even tho you meet with considerable Difficulties in the way.*

For tho you may not be able to pass a clear and satisfactory Judgment, at one time; yet you may at another, when the Mind is more dispos'd to be fix'd and attentive, and the Body (perhaps) in better Temper. We all know, by every Day's Experience, that we are not at all times equally capable or ready Judges, even of the very same things. There are some lucky Seasons, wherein Difficulties do, as it were, explain themselves to us, which at other times

would not yield to the greatest Labour and Importance.

As sometimes on the other hand, things that are not very mysterious, will force a Man to give over his search, and wait a more favourable Opportunity.

And therefore, we are not presently to throw aside so necessary and important a Work as this is, because we do not at the first or second Attempt (it may be) bring it to so happy a Conclusion as was expected.

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## S E C T. XLIII.

**T**O this I may add also (as another very necessary piece of Advice) *That if you cannot come to a satisfactory Conclusion by your selves, you would not scruple to consult those, who may be able to put you in the right way of doing so.*

It is not unlikely, that some People, who have been us'd to think of a particular Subject, should be able to reason with more Ease and better Method upon it, than those who are perfect strangers to it. And it is no more shame to a Man to make use of the Counsel and Assistance of others, in such a Case as this, where the Peace of his Mind is concern'd; than to ask the Advice of a *Physician*, in order to the Removal of any bodily Distemper.



## S E C T. XLIV.

**I**T will be objected perhaps, *That it will cost a deal of Time and Pains, to put these Rules in Practice; and that Men will rather be frightened from, than encourag'd to the Practice of so difficult a Work.*

*Ans.* First, Consider how little you are discourag'd, at the Prospect of a vast deal of Pains and Labour, in other Affairs which are of infinitely less Moment. You can rise early, and sit up late, to contrive for a worldly Interest, without any of these Complaints. You can bend your Thoughts, even to the endangering of your Life or Health, and slave and drudge without Intermission, upon any little matter that is to set you off, and purchase you a Reputation amongst Men. And if you can be so indefatigably diligent and resolute in those Concerns, and must presently be tir'd and dispirited in Affairs of this nature, upon every Difficulty that lies in your way; the Reason is plainly, because you will not apply your selves to them, and therefore, all the ill Consequences of the Neglect, must lie intirely at your own Doors.

## S E C T. XLV.

Secondly, **W**Hatever Pains it costs you, to go thro this Work, you ought to remember, *That if you ever make your Mind easy, you must be forc'd to proceed after this, or some such way as this is.* For in the very Nature

of the thing, there is no other way to come to a Certainty, but this of distinguishing, examining, and making just and natural Inferences, from the Circumstances of a Case.

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## S E C T. XLVI.

**B**UT, Thirdly, *Is there not enough in the Success and good Effects of the Enquiry, to recompense you for all the Pains you are at in the making of it?*

Consider, that to manage this Affair well, is what is absolutely necessary, in order to your forming a right Judgment of things, and to prevent your running into Inconveniences, which may make you uneasy in this Life, and perhaps miserable in the next.

And would not every wise Man therefore, resolve to think and argue as close as possible, and run Consequences as far as they will fairly go; when the Result of his doing thus, tends so much to his present Peace and Quiet, as well as his Everlasting Security?

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## S E C T. XLVII.

**Y**OU will be ready to ask now, *Suppose a Man to have gone this way to work, with all the Care and Caution imaginable, what will be the Issue of it, and what may he depend upon at last for his Satisfaction?*

*Ans<sup>r</sup>.* If after such faithful and diligent Management of the Enquiry (which lies before you).

you) you find your self fairly induc'd, to conclude, *The Evidence to be of such a Nature, as obliges the Understanding of a rational Creature to yield its Assent*: I say, you may safely yield your Assent thereto, depending upon it, that you shall not find your self deceiv'd in so doing.

But then observe, that it lies upon you your self, to be at a Certainty about these two Points. First, *That you have carefully observ'd the foremention'd Rules, in your Enquiry and Examination of things.* Secondly, *That you have taken Care to see, whether the Evidence in the present Case, comes up to the Characters and Conditions of such an Evidence, as was before demonstrated, directly and positively to oblige Mankind to yield their Assent.* For if you are uncertain about either of these particulars, we cannot pretend to answer for the Consequence; otherwise we dare assure you, that you may be easy in the Conclusion you draw.

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## S E C T. XLVIII.

Quest. **B**UT upon what just Grounds may a Man be assur'd, that he shall not be deceiv'd in passing such a Judgment; supposing these two things you speak of, to be done?

Ans. The Grounds you have for such an Assurance, are these.

First, *That the bountiful and wise Author of Nature, has furnish'd you (as a rational Agent) with Faculties, by which you are enabl'd to distinguish Right from Wrong, and Truth from Falshood, in all Cases that are of real Concern to you.*

For without such a Power as this, 'tis utterly impossible, that you should ever behave your self as an *intelligent* Creature ought to do. Because, to act in due Order and Decorum, necessarily requires a *Capacity of knowing* and distinguishing things. And therefore, if you are destitute of such a Capacity, you are under no *Moral* Obligations either to God or Man. For you cannot be oblig'd to impossibilities: And 'tis absolutely impossible to act rightly, unless it be by mere Accident, without knowing what is Right, and what is not.

So that the Consequence will be this, *viz.* *That you must either cease to own your self a rational intelligent Being (and be content to be rank'd with some lower Species of Animals, for the future) or else you must stand by this as a certain Truth, That God has made such a Provision in the Constitution of your reasonable Nature, that you are thereby made really capable of doing what I say.*

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## S E C T. XLIX.

Secondly, **Y**OU may be certain likewise, *That God Almighty is not, nor cannot be, the Author of any of your Delusions or Mistakes.*

He will neither deceive your Faculties with false and wrong Objects; nor mislead them in their Operations, about right and proper Objects.

He will not present Imposture to you, under the specious appearance of Truth; nor alter the Nature and Order of things, on purpose to make you out in your Conclusions about them.

If

If you do not firmly believe these things of your Maker, you cannot believe his Moral Perfections. And if you deny those (or any of his) Perfections, you deny his Existence.

And if you believe no God, it is not to be expected, that you should believe any thing else. And if you once come to such a Degree of *Scepticism*, you are indeed out of the reach of this Argument, and of all others whatsoever.

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## S E C T. L.

Thirdly, **O**BSERVE now from hence, *What assurance you may have with respect to the matter we are speaking of.* For if you are qualify'd with sufficient Abilities, for the Search and Discovery of necessary Truth; also if the Author of Nature, will be neither the Cause or Occasion of your running into any Mistakes: It follows, *That you may come to a determinate Conclusion, about the Truth or Falshood of a Case, wherein you are deeply concern'd; provided you be not wanting to your self, and will use a regular Method in the Enquiry.* And consequently, when you are come to such a Conclusion, you may be at a certainty, as to the Point of your own Deception. For you will never be deceiv'd by any thing else, if you do not deceive your selves, but take care to use the Helps, and exert the Powers which God has given you, in such manner as you are bound to do, and are capable of doing.



## S E C T. LI.

*Fourthly,* **N**OR will the acknowledg'd Fallibility of Human Nature, or its Liableness to Deception, or the actual Mistakes and Deceptions of People at any time, in Enquiries of this nature; be any just Ground at all, for you to pretend, you cannot be at a Certainty, and so by that means think to excuse your self from the Labour of trying.

For the Case plainly terminates in this short *Dilemma*, one side of which you must of necessity chuse.

*Either the Fallibility of Human Nature is really such, that you are constrain'd thereby to remain always doubtful of the Truth of the Conclusions you draw: Or it is not.*

If you say it is, Then you either disown all Obligations to any sort of Duty, which a reasonable Creature should perform: Or else, You fall foul upon the Perfections of God, in supposing him to have bound you to the discharge of various Duties; and yet to have made you incapable of such an Exercise of your Faculties, as is absolutely necessary in order thereto.

If you confess it is not, Then all the Defectibility, or Liableness to Deception, that is in Human Nature, can never be a Reason, why you should pretend to be always in suspense about the Conclusions you draw; but will only be a Reason, why you should use your utmost Care and Caution in the drawing of them: Which is the very thing that we most earnestly persuade you to.

And

And then, as to the actual Mistakes that some People may have made in Disquisitions of this kind, or the gross Delusions they may have been led into, by depending upon the Truth of things, as made out to them by *Moral Evidence*: These sure cannot be Stumbling-blocks in the way of any Man, that is not willing to lay hold of every slight Occasion, to deter himself from the doing of his Duty.

That some People who have trusted to Moral Evidence, have been deceiv'd in so doing, I hope you think no more an Argument against Proofs of this nature in general; than you think Blunders and Paralogisms, to be a Scandal to the Nature of *Demonstration*; or the Intemperance of some particular Persons, an Argument against the Use of those necessary Blessings of Life, which they so faultily abuse.

## S E C T. LII.

**B**UT being now upon this Head, it may perhaps be of some use, to point out in concise Terms, *the more general Causes and Springs of Mistake in matters of Argumentation*; or to shew by what means it is, *That Men become accessory to their own Delusions, in the Conclusions they draw, as the Result of their Enquiries into things.*

Now this may be,

First, *By arguing with Media, which in their own Nature are not just, or proper to afford a positive Conclusion to be drawn from them.*

And therefore a Man may be mistaken this way, if he argues with *Data*, which are either—

*Foreign and impertinent to the Business in hand.*

*Or*

*Or too few and defective*; and therefore, insufficient to furnish him with matter for a fair Conclusion.

*Or more than are needful*; by which means the Mind is perplex'd and confounded, and a Man is sometimes led into Conclusions which contradict one another: in which Case 'tis very likely, that he fixes upon that part of the Contradiction, which most favours his own prejudic'd and mistaken Notions, and so comes to impose upon himself.

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### S E C T. LIII.

*Secondly,* **A**S a Man may be deceiv'd (as to his main Conclusion) by arguing even truly and justly, from *Data* that are unjust and improper; *so he may likewise go as wide of the Truth, by arguing after an irregular manner, upon Data which (in their own Nature) are ever so just, adequate, and pertinent to the Matter which is enquir'd into.*

The most obvious Causes of this, are *Ignorance, Inconsideration, Precipitancy, Partiality* (arising from prejudicate Notions and Opinions) and whatever else may be reduc'd to, or are cognate with these.

Nor is it a Jot more strange, for Men to draw wrong Conclusions, from just and natural Premises, than to infer things from such Principles, as will never fairly afford them any Conclusion at all.

However, it may be sufficient, in order to the end of our going Right, in these sort of Enquiries, to have shewn as well the general Causes

ses of Mistakes, as a plain and practicable Method, by which we may avoid them.

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## S E C T. LIV.

**T**HE third general Head propos'd, was the Consideration of the Impossibility, *That Providence should ever countenance, or suffer any sort of Imposture to be countenanc'd, with an Evidence of such Qualifications and Conditions, as we have been hitherto discoursing of.*

And this can need no Proof to those who pretend to believe the Existence of such a Being, as he that made and governs the World, must necessarily be: So that this Labour is saved. All that can conclude, *That God is Eternal Truth, infinite Love and Goodness, unspotted Justice and Holiness; that he could not make Creatures to delude and tantalize, nor give them Faculties, which should never be of any use to them:* All I say, that can conclude this (as all may, that can conclude that God is) may also from thence presently infer, the simple absolute Impossibility, of his ever dealing after this manner, with a Race of reasonable Creatures.

So that nothing remains for me to do upon this Head, but only to deduce a few *Corollaries*; and so conclude the *Second Part* of this Discourse.

## S E C T. LV.

**I**F Delusions and Impostures can never be pass'd upon Mankind, with Evidences of such a Nature as has been describ'd; then it follows,

Coroll. 1. *Wherever we can be sure of an Evidence thus qualify'd, there we may be sure, we shall not be deceiv'd, in giving our Assent thereto.*

Coroll. 2. *Where the Events of things do not answer to our Schemes of Reasoning upon them; the Evidences upon which we proceeded to argue in those Cases, were not, in their Nature, sufficient to afford us such a Conclusion.*

So that some Fallacies or Mistakes, must be committed; tho not then perceiv'd or suspected by us.

Coroll. 3. *Where we are sure of an Imposture, by the plain and undeniable Marks of it; there we can be certain, that the Evidences offer'd to persuade Men of the Truth of it, would, if thorowly examin'd, appear to be weak and frivolous.*

Coroll. 4. *Where things of great Importance are to be believ'd by Mankind, we may be certain, That Divine Providence will order the matter so, that they shall be propos'd to us with such Evidences, as will be sufficient to oblige our Understandings (as we are reasonable Creatures) to assent to them as true.*

Tho this does not follow directly from the PROP. it self, yet it follows immediately from that



that which is the grand Reason of the PROP.  
*viz. The infinite Perfection of the Supreme Author  
of the Universe.*

For the Divine Mercy and Goodness, are every whit as much concern'd, to give important Truths, a Degree of Evidence, fit to recommend them to us, as every way proper Objects of Belief; as those, and other Divine Perfections are, to deny such Evidence to Impostures, that they may not be believ'd by us. And therefore, I infer, *That as for all things, which any way relate to the Salvation of Mankind, and are to be prov'd by Moral Evidence; we shall be sure to find, upon Examination, that they have a Degree of Evidence, proportional to the intrinsic Weight and Importance of them, and in all respects sufficient to convince our Judgments of their Truth and Reality.*

And I shall now proceed to enquire (according to the fourth and last Article of the Method propos'd) whether there be not such an Evidence as this, for the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

*The End of the Second Part.*





## Part the Third,

*Containing the Proofs, for the  
Fact of Christ's Resurrec-  
tion.*

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### C O N T E N T S.

*Some general things, wherein the Christians and  
Deists both agree.*

*Concerning the Writings of the Evangelists, or first  
Christian Historians.*

*The Evidences for the Fact of Christ's Resurrec-  
tion, propos'd and examin'd.*

*A Demonstration, that this Evidence has all the  
Conditions of an Evidence, which obliges Human  
Understanding to yield its Assent.*

SECT.

## S E C T. I.



IN the Management of this Part of the Design, which now lies before us, there will be these three things in the general to be done.

*First*, To shew upon what Foundations, the *Christians* ground their Belief of the *Resurrection of Christ Jesus*; or what *Mediums* those are, by which they argue themselves into this Persuasion, *That it was real Matter of Fact, that he rose again from the Dead.*

*Secondly*, To enquire, whether these Reasonings of theirs upon this Subject, are strictly fair and just; that is, *Whether the Evidence upon which they receive this Doctrine as true, has all those Qualifications, which render it directly and positively Obligatory to our Understandings, by all the known Laws of reasonable Nature, and the Constitution of the World we live in.*

*Thirdly*, *Having diligently examin'd and compar'd the Grounds upon which the Christians believe, and the Deists reject this Doctrine; I shall impartially shew the Result of all, and then make such Inferences as are proper to be made from thence.*

## S E C T. II.

IN arguing this great Point, after a Method so natural and fair, as that which is here propos'd, and upon such Principles as are laid down, and, I hope, sufficiently demonstrated, in the

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*foregoing part of this Treatise: It must needs be, That either the Christians who maintain and defend it, or the Gentlemen on the other side, who deny it; must, in so doing, be forc'd upon something very absurd and irrational; the Standard to judg by, being the plain Reason and common Practice of Mankind.*

If, whilst we attempt to infer the *Truth of the Resurrection of Christ*, we run counter to any truly rational and allow'd Principles; if the Arguments we make use of, when thorowly sifted and trac'd, are found to terminate in that which the sober Sense of Mankind must condemn, as sophistical, false, or impertinent; and this, not as the Effect of bare Inadvertency or Mismanagement (because a very good Argument may possibly be badly handled, and yet ought not for that Reason, to lose any thing of its Credit) but of the very Constitution and Nature of the Argument it self. And if this be the Result of all, and every one of those Arguments, which can be produc'd in Defence of this Doctrine, or in order to prove the certain Truth of it: *Then the Controversy is at an end, and the Christians must give up the Cause.* Because Truth can never possibly run Men into any real Absurdities in the Defence of it; nor can God oblige us to receive any Point of Doctrine, to the utter overthrowing of that Reason he has given us, to guide our selves by; tho he may oblige us to receive that, which our Reason can't solve all the Difficulties of.

If on the other side, those who oppose this Doctrine, can neither do that, nor defend themselves, without being oblig'd to stand by such Conclusions, as the common Sense of Mankind, would upon a fair hearing, condemn as irrational;

tional; if they are necessitated to have recourse to Principles that are either manifestly false and contradictory, or doubtful and precarious, in order to solve the Difficulties that are propos'd to them; or can no way guard themselves against such Difficulties, but by artful Evasions and Excursions from the matter in hand: In a word, if in the natural Course of the Argument, they are forc'd upon things that tend to darken or blunder the Cause, and do not terminate in a direct and positive Answer to what is urg'd upon them: In this Case, it will be very evident, *That Truth cannot be on their side, and that therefore (to act as they ought to do) they should, without any more ado, yield the great Point in Dispute.*

What therefore remains to be done, is to make this Comparison between their Argumentations and ours. 'Tis certain, they must be as opposite one to another, as the Opinions they are produc'd in favour of: and therefore, cannot be sound and true on both sides. The *Paralogism*, the *Absurdity*, or whatever it be, must be found either with them, or with us; and consequently, where it lies, will infallibly point out who is in the right, and who in the wrong.

And tho a *Christian* may possibly have other Arguments, tending (in conjunction with those which are purely rational) to assure him of the Verity of the *Christian Faith* and *Doctrine*; yet (these being no more than mere *Fancy* and *Enthusiasm*, in the Opinions of these *Gentlemen*) they are not to be so much as mention'd in this place. 'Tis to *Reason* they appeal; and therefore, to plain downright Reason we must go.



## S E C T. III.

**T**HAT we may proceed the more methodically, and not dispute about things, wherein we are on both sides agreed; it will be requisite to take notice of some Points, relating to the Person and History of *Jesus Christ*, which the *Deists* (together with the greatest part of Mankind besides) do as freely subscribe to the Truth of, as the *Christians* themselves.

And, *First*, I believe it will be allow'd without much difficulty, *That there was such a Person as Jesus Christ, who was born at Bethlehem in Judæa, in the Reign of Augustus Cæsar, and crucify'd at Jerusalem in the Reign of Tiberius; Pontius Pilate being then the Roman Governour.*

This is what most Sects and Parties of Men, who have ever heard of *Christianity*, do unanimously agree in. The *Mahometans* indeed differ from all the rest, as to the latter part of the Proposition: for out of an excess of Respect to *Jesus Christ*, they will by no means allow of his infamous Crucifixion and Death; but affirm, *That he was taken up into \* Heaven, and some Image of him only left upon the Cross in his room, by which the Jews, as well as his own Followers, who pretended to be Witnesses of the Fact, were impos'd upon, and made to believe that he suffer'd, when in reality he did not.* But we shall not need to be much solicitous about their Testimony in this matter, since they deny it,

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\* Adrian. Reland. de Relig. Mohamed. Lib. 1. Pag. 35. Edit. Ultrajec.

upon so honourable an Account, and are so clear and express in all the rest, relating to the Life and Character of our *Saviour*; and especially, since there are such abundant Concessions made of it, by Men of all other Persuasions, and particularly by those, with whom we are principally concern'd.

For the *Deists* have prov'd to some purpose, *That they believe all that we have here said of Jesus Christ.*

And the *Jews* know it to be true, and are as free to own it as the former.

The reproachful Name of תלוי (or the Person who was hang'd) which they so commonly bestow on him, as also that of עוברי תלוי (the Servants of him who was hang'd) which they give the *Christians*, shew sufficiently, if there were no more, *That they are no Unbelievers in this Point.* But they have other Proofs of it amongst themselves, which we hope there will be a time for their so seriously considering, *That they shall come to talk of him whom they crucify'd, in a more respectful manner, and instead of תלוי, by way of Reproach, shall call him משיח, in profound Honour and Devotion.*

The Testimony of their fam'd Countryman \* *Josephus*, concerning our *Saviour*, is well known to all the learned World; who are sensible also, how plain and express it is, not only as to the Life, Miracles, and Crucifixion of *Jesus Christ*, but his *Resurrection* also, and the fulfilling of Prophecies in him, and the wonderful Conversion both of *Jews* and *Gentiles* to the Faith of his Gospel. I am aware how much

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\* *Antiq. Judaic. Lib. 18. Cap. 4. Pag. 621. Edit. Genev. 1635.*

the Genuineness of this Passage is disputed by some, as also how vigorously 'tis defended by others. And tho I do not know, but that on one side, there may be those, who perhaps are over-fond and zealous for having it genuine; yet I doubt too, there are others, who are *afraid* lest it should be so. As for my own part, I freely own, I believe it to be as much *Josephus's*, as any thing in all the *Book of Antiquities*: And because I would not willingly be rank'd amongst the People that are irrationally fond of it, and will have it genuine, right or wrong, without inquiring into the matter; I shall therefore give my Reasons, why I believe it is not a Forgery.

## S E C T. IV.

**F**IRST of all; *This Testimony is recorded, and taken notice of, as Josephus's, by many old Writers of unquestionable Credit.* To begin with one who was early enough; *Eusebius* gives it at large in his \* *Demonstr. Evangel.* Lib. 3. Pag. 124. *Edit. Paris. 1628.* He likewise repeats the same, *Histor. Ecclesiast.* Lib. 1. Cap.

\* Γίνεται δὲ καὶ ἐκείνων τὸ χεῖρον Ἰησοῦς Κορὸς ἀνδρῶν, εἶχε ἀνδρᾶ ἀυτὸν λέγειν Χρή. Ἦν γὰρ πρῶτον ἐργῶν ποιητὴς, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀληθινὴν βρομῶσαν. Καὶ πολλὰς μὲν τῶν Ἰουδαίων, πολλὰς δὲ καὶ Ἑλληνικὰς ἐπηγάγετο. Ὁ Χριστὸς ἔτι καὶ αὐτῶν ἐνδείξει τῶν παρ' ἡμῶν ἀρχόντων σαυρῶν ὁπληρωτικῶς Πιλάτου, ἐκ ἐπαυσαντο οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπασάντες. Ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τεῖντω ἡμέραν παλιν ζῶν, τὸ δεινὸν Προφητῶν ταῦτα τε καὶ ἀλλὰ μυρία περὶ αὐτῶν εἰρηκότων. Ὅθεν εἰσέτι νῦν ἔτι καὶ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἐκ ἐπέ-  
λπις τὸ φύλον.

11. Pag. 30. *Edit. Paris. 1659.* [in vita Tiberii.]

We have the same Testimony recorded and quoted by *Nicephorus Callistus, Histor. Eccles. Lib. 1. Cap. 39. Pag. 84. & 85. Edit. Paris. 1574.* And *Sozomen* introduces it with a particular Elogy of *Josephus* himself, *Histor. Eccles. Lib. 1. Cap. Pag. 399. Edit. Par. 1668.* καὶ ἰωσήπῳ ὃ ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ ἱερὺς, ἀνὴρ ᾧ καὶ τε ἰσδαρίοις καὶ ῥωμαίοις ἐπιδοξότατος γενόμενος, ἀξιόχρεως ἂν εἴη μάρτυς τῇ περὶ Χριστοῦ ἀληθείας— And then he goes on, and repeats exactly to the same purpose, what we find in *Eusebius*, and *Callistus*, and the *Josephus* we have at present. *Suidas* also sets down the very same, in the word ἰωσήπῳ, with this particular Remark, that *Josephus* gives it in the 18th Book of his *Antiquities* [*Edit. Cantab. 1705.*] And this agrees perfectly with the Account given by *St. Jerom, De Scriptor. Ecclesiast.* where he refers us to *Josephus* for the foremention'd Account of our Saviour.

Lastly, We find it repeated by *Isidorus Pelusiotæ* to the same purpose, as in all the rest, *Lib. 4. Epist. 225. Pag. 549. Edit. Paris. 1638.* These are those which I have taken notice of; tho I know there are more reckon'd up, who attribute this Testimony to *Josephus*, and have put it out of all doubt, that they firmly believ'd it to be his.

On the other hand, it is objected, That this Passage is not taken notice of at all, by those antient Defenders of the *Christian Cause*, *Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, &c.* who one would think, should not have fail'd, upon some Occasion or other, to have put the Adversaries they dealt with (which were of all sorts, *Jews* as well as *Gentiles*) in mind of so remarkable a Testi-

mony as this, and that from so remarkable an Author too, and one who was not a *Christian*. So that here is positive Testimony alledg'd on one side; and the want or defect of it on the other. And tho it be true, that the want of Testimony, from some Persons, in some particular Circumstances, may be look'd upon as a pretty strong Presumption, that a thing was not so or so, as 'tis reported to be; yet all things being well consider'd, on both sides, in this Case; I think 'tis plain, *that this defect is not in Reason to be esteem'd equivalent to all the positive Testimony, which is, and may be produc'd; especially, since it may be shewn upon some good grounds, that this Passage of Josephus may be genuine, and yet that those Christian Writers before-mention'd, should not take notice of it neither.* In a word, if this Testimony be a Forgery, foisted in by any *Christian* Hand, all that we can say, is, *That such Practices are infinitely unworthy of the Christian Name, and hateful to the Divine and Holy Author of it, who has condemn'd all manner of Fraud and Deceit by the Laws of his Religion, and will punish it (by whomsoever committed, and upon what Pretence soever, without sincere Repentance.)* But if it were really penn'd by Josephus himself, and extant in the first Copies of his History; yet for all that, there is a fair Account to be given, of the *silence of the foremention'd Christian Fathers concerning it.*

If you ask *how?* I answer; from the Abuse of the Copies they chanc'd to make use of, in which this famous Testimony was very probably wanting. And if you ask still, *How it should come about that such a Passage should be wanting in those Copies?* I answer; that in all likelihood it was raz'd out of as many Copies, by the *Jews*  
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(or those in Confederacy with them) as they could get fair Opportunities to debauch: By the *Jews*, I say, from whose known Malice and Hatred to *Christianity*, nothing less than so vile a Practice was to be expected. For *Josephus* liv'd in the very Times of the Apostles themselves, when the Story of *Christ Jesus* and his mighty Works, was fresh in the World. And, besides being an Author of so great a Reputation, he was one of their own Country and Religion too.

Now let any Man but think with himself, under what Notion these People must be represented to the World, when one of their Countrymen should come and give such a Character of a Person, whom they had treated with the utmost Indignity, and put to death as a vile Malefactor. Would it not set them out as a most forlorn and execrable Generation of Men, and justify all that our Saviour had said of them before, in the several sharp Rebukes he had given them? How could it be imagin'd that they would ever suffer the Seal of such an Author as this, to be set to the Truth of *Christianity*, and to go along with it thro the World; if Pains and Watching, if Falshood and Bribery; in short, if any sort of Artifice possible to be made use of, could avail to the taking of it away? There is no doubt to be made therefore, but they did the utmost that their Power and Policy could effect. And as they could not compass the razing this Testimony, out of all the Copies dispers'd up and down the World; so they took care to do it in those, which they and their Emissaries had the Opportunity of managing. For what they could not do by themselves openly, and as *Jews*, they might accomplish by other hands, less suspected and fitter to do that  
work,

work, than theirs. Nor have there ever been wanting amongst Mankind, some so degenerate, as for worldly Considerations, to yield to be employ'd in such base Work.

Again, This ought to be consider'd too, *That 'tis a far easier way of abusing an Author, to rob him of something he has said, than 'tis to foist any thing into him, and make that pass for his which he never did say.* For besides the Care incumbent on such Impostors, to observe exactly the Laws of Transition and Connection, in order to make their Forgeries all of a-piece with the Author's Text, that they may look neatly and handsomly, and not discover the Fraud by the Botch: Besides this, they must have studied the Author so well, as to be perfect Masters of his Stile and Diction, and be able to express themselves with that sort of Air, and in that Mode which is peculiar to the Author they pretend to counterfeit. Which I look upon to be a difficulty superable, but by very few; I mean so as not to leave the Cheat discoverable, by some Criteria or other afterwards. However, 'tis apparent, *That this would be a far more difficult and troublesom piece of Knavery, than barely to omit or leave a Sentence out of a Set of Copies, and by that means represent the Author (to such Persons as had the Fortune to light on them) as never having written any such thing at all.* In short, if upon Examination it should appear, *That there is the very Spirit of Josephus's Stile and Diction in this famous Testimony concerning our Saviour; then I hope the Genuineness of it will be out of Dispute with all considering Persons, whatever plausible Objections have been, or ever may be urg'd against it.*

## S E C T. V.

**B**UT I must say farther, it is the more credible, *That this noted Testimony, concerning Jesus Christ, may have been raz'd out of some Copies, by some wicked Hands; because there are plain Indications of such foul Practices, in other Cases relating to the same Author.*

For it is notorious, that *Josephus* is actually quoted and refer'd to, for Passages which do not now appear in him. Now 'tis never to be imagin'd, that Men who had the least Sense of Honour and Reputation, if they had no regard to common Honesty and Truth, nor to the Cause they maintain'd, which was so much disputed and despis'd in the World; would ever have quoted a celebrated Author, (in the Face of all Mankind, and in the midst of Foes as well as Friends, and those very acute and learned ones too) I say, that they would ever have appeal'd to such a Person, as saying such and such things; if those things had not been actually in the Copies they made use of, and been universally receiv'd as genuine in their Days. For as such an egregious Piece of Knavery could not possibly 'scape being discover'd, by some one or other of the contrary side; so the Discovery of it must have fix'd such a Blot of Scandal and Reproach on those Persons, as no Time could ever have wip'd off, but would have been remembred by all Posterity, with Indignation and Contempt.

What I shall mention to this purpose, in the first place, is that Testimony of *Josephus*, concerning *James the Brother of Christ*. This we have

have in *Eusebius*, *Hist. Eccles.* Lib. 2. Cap. 23. Pag. 65. And he does not only quote *Josephus* for it, but tells us expressly his very words.

For having shewn (in words of his own) how just and righteous a Man *James* was, and that the sober and more considerate Men amongst the *Jews* believ'd the Destruction of *Jerusalem* to be a Punishment inflicted on them, for murdering of him: He then brings in this famous Author, saying the very same thing in these Words. ταῦτα ὃ συμβέβηκεν Ἰουδαίοις, κατ' ἐκδίκησιν Ἰακώβου τῆ δίκαιου, ὅς ὡ ἀδελφὸς ἰησοῦ τῆ λεγομένης χριστοῦ. ἐπειδὴ περ δικαιοτάτον αὐτὸν οὐτα, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀπέκτειναν.

But *Origen*, a more antient Writer, gives the very same Account of the matter, for which he refers to *Josephus*, *Antiq.* Lib. 18. And this he does, *Contr. Cels.* Lib. 1. Pag. 35. And *St. Jerom*, *De Script. Ecclesiast.* refers to the same Author and Book of him, for the Passage quoted by the other two.

Now I think, all People are agreed, *That no such Passage as this is to be found in Josephus now a-days.* 'Tis true indeed, he does not pass over in silence the Death of a Person so remarkable for Piety and Vertue, as *St. James* was. For he tells us (*Antiq.* Lib. 20. Pag. 698.) *That this Fact was highly displeasing to all the just and good People; and that Application was made to the King, to lay his Commands on the High Priest Ananus, that no such things might be done for the future.* But there is no sign of any such Account, as we have out of *Origen* and *Eusebius*; which however they came by, I think 'tis plain to any Man, *that they did not, nor could not invent it.*

## S E C T. VI.

I Know it is said, *That they made use of corrupt and vitiated Copies of Josephus.*

But this is *gratis dictum*, and they have nothing that I could ever see, like Proof, to support it. And 'tis plain, they espouse the most improbable and unnatural *Hypothesis* of the two, by far; for 'tis easier to abuse an Author by taking from him, than by adding to him. However, I think it is intolerably precarious, and in short downright trifling, to suppose, as some do, that *Origen*, in mentioning this Passage, trusted his Memory too far, and quoted what he had never at all read in *Josephus*. For at this rate, what Author is to be depended upon, if such Suppositions as these are to take place, without plain and particular Proof, of such a degree of Heedlessness in a Man that writes? And I would fain know, what Privilege these *Moderns* who talk after this manner, have, to escape this Distemper of dreaming, and fancying they read what they do not read; any more than the Antients? 'Tis true, there are strange things laid to the Charge of some of the old *Christian Writers*: for *Heathen Philosophers and Historians* are easily pardon'd for whatever they do amiss; nay, their very Blunders are made Beauties, and serve to discover something very rare and excellent. But let those *Writers* be what they will, I make no doubt, but there are *Modern Authors* who have vastly out-done them, in all Points of *Whimsy, Fanaticism, and Enthusiasm*, or whatever else can be call'd vain and extravagant.

After



After all is said, I shall mention one more, who (like *Origen*) trusted his Memory too far, with respect to this very Passage; and that is *Suidas*. He (in Ἰωάννου) tells us, that *Josephus* (in the 18th Book of his *Antiq.*) asserts, *That that terrible Judgment, the Destruction of Jerusalem, was brought upon the Jews for the Murder of St. James.*

And these Persons all of them, seem to me, to talk of the matter, not as if they had borrow'd the Quotation one from another; but as if they were sure, their Author had said those things they quoted from him: *Eusebius* especially, who speaks with an Assurance, as if his Author was then lying by him: ὁ γὰρ Ἰωάννου, δι' ἀπώλυνσε καὶ τὸτ' ἐγχεύσας ἐπιμαρτύρεται, δι' ὧν φησι λέξεων, in Loc. citat.

## S E C T. VII.

**T**HERE are other Passages also, for which *Josephus* is quoted by some of those that we have mention'd; but do not appear in him at present. Such is that of *St. John Baptist*, whom *Josephus* is said, expressly to have confess'd to have been a Prophet; and that in the Book so often mention'd (*Antiq. Lib. 18.*) This is particularly recorded by *St. Jerom, De Script. Ecclesiast.* Nor can I forbear observing, what the same Author says too there, tho it be not with respect to *John Baptist*, but to *Jesus Christ*. He tells us, that *Josephus* himself owns, *That Christ was slain by the Jews, for the Multitude of his Miracles.* And *Suidas* (in Ἰωάννου) affirms both the same things, viz. *That concerning John Baptist, and that concerning*

cerning the Occasion of our Saviour's Death; and refers to the same place for them.

'Tis true indeed, *Josephus* says not a few things of *John Baptist*. He tells us (pag. 626.) *That the Jews believ'd Herod was overcome by Aretas (King of the Arabians) for taking away the Life of that Person: That he was a good Man, and one who stir'd up the Jews to the study of Piety and Justice, &c.* But all this is nothing to his being call'd a *Prophet*; which is what the foremention'd Authors declare *Josephus* expressly confesses.

We have another Example of this also, from *Suidas*, relating to *Jesus Christ* himself. This Author (in 'Ιησῦς) tells us, by way of Quotation from *Josephus*, *That Jesus sacrific'd with the Priests in the Temple.* 'Ευρομεν ἔν 'Ιάσσηπον τὸ συγγραφέα τῆς ἀλώσεως 'Ιεροσολύμων (ὃ μνήμῳ πολλῷ 'Ευσέβιου ὁ Παμφίλῳ ἐν τῇ 'Εκκλησιαστικῇ αὐτὸς 'Ιστορίᾳ ποιῆται) φανερώς λέγοντα ἐν τοῖς τῆς 'Αιχμαλωσίας αὐτὸς ὑπομνήμασιν, ὅτι 'Ιησῦς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ μετὰ τῶν ἱερέων ἡγάγετο. What put *Suidas* upon searching *Josephus*, to find whether it were true, that he had thus asserted, *That our Saviour sacrific'd with the Priests in the Temple*; this, I say, may be seen in the foremention'd place. The Story is remarkable, as well for the very plain and particular manner in which it is told, as for the subject Matter of it. However, being a very long one, and not directly to my purpose, I shall forbear inserting it here; tho I think it well worth every curious Man's reading.

And thus much may suffice, as to this celebrated Testimony of *Josephus*. My Business was, to relate Matter of Fact, as I have found it. Every Man may draw what Conclusions from thence, he thinks fit. At the same time, I shall take the liberty to offer what appears reasonable

ble to me in this matter; which others may either assent to, or dissent from, according as they find just cause.

First, *There are fewer Difficulties, in supposing this Testimony to have been some time or other, struck out of some Copies by the Jews; than in supposing, that it was ever deceitfully foisted into any, by the Christians.*

Secondly, That it is (at least) as easy to answer that Question (which some seem to lay so much stress upon) *viz. Why should those Copies of Josephus, which Origen, &c. made use of, want the Testimony concerning Christ, and have that of James; when our Copies want that of James, and have that concerning Jesus Christ?* as it is to answer the following Question: —

Why should so many credible *Writers*, who do not appear to have taken the thing upon Trust from one another, and some of whom must needs have expos'd the Cause they maintain'd, to the last degree of Insult and Contempt, by asserting a thing which all Mankind could have confuted them in: Why, I say, should they all agree, in appealing to an Author, and that in the most particular manner that can be, for such or such a Passage; if they had not really found those words in him, which they recited?

## S E C T. VIII.

**T**O the foremention'd Testimonies concerning *Jesus Christ*, we may add those of some of the *Pagan Writers* themselves.

\* *Suetonius* takes notice of him, under a Name better known to the *Latins* and *Greeks*, than *Christus* was; and therefore, instead of that, we find him call'd in this Author's History, by the Name of *Chrestus*.

The Account we have from † *Tacitus*, is much more express and particular; for he mentions the Death of *Christ*, as also the Emperor *Tiberius*, and the Governor *Pontius Pilate*, under whom he suffer'd.

|| *Pliny*, who takes no notice of these things, shews however, *what Divine Honours were paid to Jesus Christ, by the Christians in his Days*; whose Manners he makes to be strictly regular and inoffensive; their worst Fault, being only an invincible Obstinacy in adhering to their Religion.

But (leaving these which are more vulgarly quoted upon this Occasion) we find the Fact of the Crucifixion of *Jesus Christ*, expressly taken notice of by \*\* *Lucian*, who jeers both him and the *Christians* his Worshipers, on that account: τὸ ἄνεσκολοπισμένον ἐκείνον σοφιστὴν, &c. This Man seem'd to reckon it an unaccountable piece of Nonsense and Stupidity, that they should have no regard to such a pompous Train of Gods and Goddesses, as he and his *Greeks* (a wise and learned People) ador'd; but instead of that, should turn all their Devotion, to a Person, who was distinguish'd from the rest of Mankind, by an infamous and accursed Death.

\* *Sueton.* in *Claudio*.

† *Tacit.* *Ann.* *Lib.* 15.

|| *Plin.* *Lib.* 10. *Epist.* 97. ad *Trajan*.

\*\* *Lucian.* de *Morte Peregrini*, *Pag.* 996. *Edit.* *Par.* 1615. *Speaking of the Christians* ——— Θεὸς μὲν τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς ἀπειρήσωνται, τὸ δὲ ἄνεσκολοπισμὸν ἐκείνον Κοριστῶν αὐτῷ προσκυνῶσι, καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἐκείνου νόμους βιώσι.

*Julian* (who had reason to know more of *Christ* and *Christianity*, than *Lucian* did) goes much beyond him, in his Accounts of this matter. Instead of ridiculing *Christ's* Death and Passion, he endeavours to lessen the Reputation of his Life and Miracles: \* But how does he do this? Why by telling the World, *That Jesus Christ did nothing worthy of Note all the while he was here upon Earth (after all the Noise that was made about him) except a Man will reckon it a great Work, to open the Eyes of the Blind, to restore Limbs to the Lame, and deliver Persons possess'd, from the Power and Enchantments of Devils.*

These were but trifling things;—and *Jesus Christ* did nothing worth talking of. But how came it about, that *Julian* set so light by these Works of our Saviour, which the greatest part of Mankind would undoubtedly call mighty and wonderful? Why, because he pretended (at least) to believe, that some of his Heathen *Virtuoso's* could do as strange Feats as these; and (if occasion were) bestow a pair of Eyes or Legs upon them that wanted them?

So that *Christ* did nothing but what could be match'd by some of them, and therefore deserv'd no more notice than what they did. A pretty Account! But, how did *Julian* come to be assur'd of the Truth of these Facts? for 'tis notoriously plain, *that he takes them all for granted.* There can be no other reply made than this, *That the Evidence was such, as extorted that Con-*

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\* Ἔργασάμενος παρ' ὃν ἔζη χερόγον, ἔργον ἕδεν ἀκοῆς αἰζιον, εἰ μὴ πῶς ὀφείλει τὰς κυλλὰς καὶ τυφλὰς ἰάσασθαι, καὶ δαιμανῶντας ἐφορκίζειν ἐν Βιθυνίᾳ καὶ ἐν Βιθανία ταῖς κωμῆσι, τῶν μεγίστων ἔργων εἶναι. Cyril. Alexandr. contra Julian. Lib. 6. Pag. 191. Edit. Par. 1638.



session from him. If so, 'tis certain, *That there was the same Evidence for other Facts, as for these.* The same Proof that assur'd *Julian* it must needs be true, *That Christ cur'd the Possess'd, Blind and Lame;* would also satisfy him, *That he rais'd the Dead to Life, and fed several Thousands, with what would not have been a competent Allowance for so many Scores.* Nay, some of those most miraculous Actions of our Saviour, being also the most open and publick ones; have a far more convincing Evidence to go along with them, than many others of less Fame.

But the Business lay here: These Problems of *Raising the Dead, &c.* were infinitely too sublime for any of the Emperor's juggling Philosophers, even to pretend to meddle with. For there was no room for *Legerdemain and Trick* in such Cases as these, since the World must presently discover it; and all Natural Arts and Skill could signify nothing to the Production of Effects of so grand a Nature. So that the only way was, never to make any mention at all of these Works of *Christ Jesus*, but pass them by in silence. Whereas those which Human Art could shew some sort of Resemblances of, such as making the Blind see, and the Lame walk, &c. these, *that crafty Adversary of Christianity* (since he must own something) *thought it advisable enough to take notice of.* For at the same time, that he paid a little kind of Compliment to manifest Truth; he took care to own no more than what he could have the Advantage of comparing, to some effects of curious Knowledg and Skill, abroad in the Heathen World. No wonder then, he gives so slight an Account of the Miracles of *Christ Jesus*. Indeed, all the smarter Enemies of *Christianity*, were well aware of

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the Necessity there was, to make those Miracles appear as little as possible. And one way to do that, was to make them cheap and vulgar, by pretending many other Persons, who could or did do the same things.

And therefore it was, *That Philostratus and Hierocles, not being able otherwise to eclipse the Glory of Christ's Miracles, set up Apollonius Tyanæus against him.* And we know the Jews were arriv'd to that pitch of Extravagancy, as to say, *That he did all his wonderful Works, by virtue of the sacred Tetragrammaton.* In short, whatever surprizing things were reported to be done by any of the *Heathen Sages*; were they but fairly to be compar'd, with the same sort of Operations done by *Jesus Christ*: I make no question, but it would appear to every one of common Sense and Judgment, *That at the same time, that they acted the Parts of good Physicians or Chirurgcons; he behav'd himself as the Lord of Nature, and acted like one, who not only understood her, but could command and dispose of all her Motions at Pleasure.* And thus much for *Julian's Concessions.*

But above all the rest, *Celsus* makes the largest and most particular Concessions, about *Jesus Christ*; as confessing the Truth of his *Nativity*, his *Journey into Ægypt*, his *passing from Place to Place with his Disciples*, the *Fact of his Miracles*, his *being betray'd*, and lastly, his *Death and Passion*. 'Tis true, these Concessions are all made, in order either to pure Scoff and Ridicule, or to vain and impertinent Jangling. However, made they were, and the things were so evident, that they could not be denied. But as for *Celsus's railing or jesting with any of them*, that is little to the present Purpose; and his Chastizer *Origen*, has sufficiently expos'd him upon

on all those Accounts; tho not in his own way, but that of plain Reason and Argument.

I shall not need to refer to the particular Places, where these things are to be found; they being obvious to every one, who has that Author in his hands.

## S E C T. IX.

*Secondly,* **B**ESIDES these Particulars, concerning the Life and Passion of *Jesus Christ*; I believe, it will be granted likewise, without much difficulty, *That quickly after the Death of Christ, there was a Party of Men, in that same Country of Judæa, who pretended he was risen again; which thing they testified with the utmost Assurance, and in the most publick manner, to all sorts of Persons wherever they came, even to the Jews themselves, the profess'd and most inveterate Enemies of this Jesus and his Followers.* I am not here offering any thing to prove the *Resurrection of Christ* to be true, or to justify these Men, in the Report they made thereof; but only relate a thing as a bare Point of History, which I think will not be deny'd, viz. *That there were such People in those Days, who did spread abroad this strange Doctrine in the World; That that very Person, who was crucify'd before the Eyes of so vast a Croud of People at Jerusalem, did a few Days after rise again, and converse in the World for some time, amongst those who had perfectly well known him before.*

## S E C T. X.

NOW this account we have from those *Primitive Writers* of the *Christian Affairs*, whom the *Christians* themselves commonly call by the Name of *Evangelists* and *Apostles*. 'Tis true, these Persons are look'd upon by those who receive the *Christian Faith*, as Men who were divinely inspir'd, and their Writings as from God, and publish'd to the World by his Authority: However, I suppose nothing of all that at present; but appeal to them barely as the Works of some antient Historians, telling upon their own Knowledge, that such and such things concerning *Christ Jesus*, were very positively asserted, and no less firmly believ'd, by vast multitudes of People in their days. All that I have therefore to be satisfy'd in, is, *Whether these Writings be really theirs or no?* Whether the Books we attribute to them, and which we find to bear their Names, contain a sincere and genuine Account, of what they first declar'd to the World concerning these great Matters? If we can persuade our selves, upon sure and undoubted Principles, that it is so; then we may make some very good use of the Relations they give us, in the after Process of the Argument. But if the World be merely impos'd upon, with spurious and supposititious, or corrupt and adulterated Pieces, instead of the true and native Compositions of these original *Christian Writers*, from whence we might be inform'd, what their genuine Sentiments were; then they are of no significancy at all, in the present Enquiry, but must be e'en laid by and neglected,

neglected, as other false and illegitimate Pieces use to be, when known and discover'd to be such.

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## S E C T. XI.

NOW in order to the attaining a just and reasonable satisfaction in this Point, let us see the Impossibilities that attend the contrary *Hypothesis*, and at once give a fair Demonstration of the Truth of our PROP. V. Part II.

*First*, The first Teachers of the *Christian* Faith, who would not fail of using the most effectual Means, for the propagating and perpetuating a Doctrine, which they so zealously espous'd themselves (whether because *they knew it to be from God*, or for any other Reason, I do not here inquire) would not upon that score, neglect so direct and necessary a Method, for obtaining their End; as that of *committing their Doctrines to writing*, must in common Reason be allow'd to be.

This indeed, is what may be rationally expected from the Policy and Care of the first Founders of any *Sett*; as being a step so Fundamental, in order to the Preservation and Progress thereof, that without it (things being left intirely to rest upon the precarious bottom, of Memory, Tradition, Fancy and Humour, in representing those things, which were first deliver'd) nothing could follow but such Jangling and Confusion, as would soon terminate in the utter Ruin and Dissipation of that *Sett*. I need not say, that all the *Setts* we know of, that have ever made any Figure in the World, have



not fail'd to take this Course. And there are such Proofs, to evince, *That the first Founders of Christianity, did in Fact proceed after this manner*; that if they may be deny'd, a Man may as rationally deny, that there was ever such a Person as *Christ Jesus* in the World; and so put a quick end to all the Controversy about his *Resurrection*.

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## S E C T. XII.

Secondly, **W**HILE the *Apostles themselves were living*; it was impossible that any thing should be put upon the World, as their Doctrine, which was contrary to it; or should be receiv'd, as their Writing, which was not so.

For, since Innovations of this kind, could not be carry'd on, without being detected and found out by them, who were so intent upon spreading the Gospel, as to travel far and wide thro' the World, and take Cognizance themselves of the State of *Christianity*, in every Place where they came; 'tis plain, *That no Upstarts or Counterfeits could ever perfect their juggling Designs, while these first Teachers of the Gospel liv'd to have an Eye upon them, and were ready to expose the Fraud*. For, whatever Cheat of this kind, any false and perfidious Hand might possibly have attempted; yet the first Founders of the *Christian* Sect (who must be allow'd to be the best Judges of their own Doctrines and Opinions) would, I hope, be heard by the rest of Mankind, before all other Pretenders whatsoever. Their Assertions in such a Case, would be decisive;  
and

and every body would take it for granted, *That those Tenets were none of theirs, which they should solemnly disclaim, and openly protest against, in the face of all the World, from whence such Multitudes of Witnesses might be call'd out to attest the Doctrines they had both preach'd and written.* 'Tis true indeed, the Authors of a *Se<sup>c</sup>t*, may outlive the Credit and Reputation of their own *Se<sup>c</sup>t*. Their Doctrines may be suppress'd by Force, or overturn'd by superior Argument, while the Preachers themselves are in being. But that others, which are either quite contrary, or which they never thought any thing of, should be coin'd and foisted into the room of them, and pass universally for the genuine Institutes of such and such Men, while they themselves are alive, and have it in their power to detect the Forgery; is a thing so absurd and impossible, that a Man may well be thought to have quite lost his Taste, that does not relish it as such.

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### S E C T. XIII.

Thirdly, **T***HE same is to be said, of that space of Time, during which, the Autography or Original Manuscripts, of the Apostles and Evangelists, were preserv'd in the Christian Church.*

For while these were at hand, to be search'd and consulted, the Case would be the same, as if the very Authors themselves had been alive, to give their own determinations in Person. How long time after *Christ*, the Church had these venerable Writings in possession, is not  
very

very material to the present Argument. I am only concern'd to shew, that the Attempts of *Impostors* must needs have been vain and fruitless, while the *Autographa* themselves were extant; whether it were a greater, or a less space of Time that they were so. However, 'tis observable, that \* *Tertullian* intimates, as if they were (some of them at least) preserv'd till the Age wherein he liv'd, and to be seen at that time: which is far from being incredible, if we consider the prodigious Zeal and Veneration of the *Christians* in those days, for whatever they esteem'd Divine and Sacred; as also, that this Writer flourish'd at the latter end of the Second, or the very beginning of the Third Century.

Besides, I believe the learned World can furnish some Examples of this kind, and shew, by unanswerable Proofs, that the very Hand-Writings of some Authors, have been preserv'd (I will not say, only for as long, but even) for a longer time, than what we are now speaking of, amounts to.

## S E C T. XIV.

Fourthly, **N**O one particular Party or Sect of Christians, or pretended Christians, could ever possibly have manag'd matters so, as to impose on the rest of the World, by any grand For-

\* Age jam, qui voles Curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tuæ, percurre Ecclesias Apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ adhuc Cathedræ Apostolorum suis Locis præsent, apud quas ipsæ Authenticæ Literæ eorum recitantur. *De Præscript. adversus Hæreticos.*

gery,

*gery, or Adulteration, of the Writings of the New Testament.*

For whatever *Sett* should have attempted such a thing, could never have made any Progress in it; but all the other *Setts* and *Persuasions* of *Christians*, which were contrary to them, must have been conscious of the base Design. And if a *Zeal and Veneration* for these Writings, as divinely inspir'd, had not been sufficient to prevail with some of them, to bestir themselves, and proclaim so notorious an *Imposture* to the World; yet the *Enmity and Quarrels*, arising from contrariety of Interests and Opinions, would have been such a guard upon these Books, as the utmost Care and Policy of any ill designing Party, would never have been able to elude. Where Men indeed are all of a Mind, and their Schemes on all sides perfectly agree; there being no room for Jealousy and Suspicion, there is likewise no Reason for their having an Eye upon one another. But where they run out into *Parties and Factions*, and *Disputes* rise high betwixt them, about the Sense and Meaning of the Doctrines they have receiv'd; each Party justifying their own Opinions, from the Copies they have amongst them; in this Case, every side will be sure to observe their *Antagonists*, and see that they have Justice done them in all the Appeals made to that Book; by whose Authority they all agree, to have the matters in Debate amongst them decided. So that if those on one side, should have recourse to any unfair Artifices, either in order to the recommending their own Opinions to the Belief of Men, or else for the sake of Victory over their Adversaries; the others who would never bear such foul Play, to be sure would  
not

not keep their Counsel, but paint them out in their proper Colours, of Knavery and Deceit, to all Mankind. For the Rage about Opinions (especially if thought to be of great Consequence) is like that of the *Sea*; and a *Tide* may as soon be stop'd, as Revenge in such Cases, if there be but Opportunity to exert it. In a word, tho Divisions and Animosities, are in themselves, contrary to the Nature, Design, and Precepts of the *Christian Religion*; yet there is no doubt, but that Divine Providence, which often brings the greatest Good out of Evil, has made signal use, even of these Contentions, in order to its security. For by this means, one Party has been a sure Guard upon another, and all of them animated to look so sharply about them, that nothing of dangerous Consequence, to the common Interests of *Christianity*, could ever be transacted any where.

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## S E C T. XV.

*Fifthly*, **I**T is still more incredible, (and I think, what the fondest Credulity in Nature can scarce admit of) *That these Books should be abus'd, or new ones coin'd in the room of them, by a Confederacy of all the Parties, and Sects of Christians throughout the World.*

This therefore, we will let pass as a piece of Absurdity, which sufficiently discovers it self at first sight.



## S E C T. XVI.

*Sixthly,* **N**OR will it require much more Pains, for any considering Person to assure himself, *That this could never possibly be done, by any Party of Men, who were open and avow'd Enemies to the Christian Religion.*

For if there be Reason to conclude it absurd and impossible, that any Party, of or in the *Christian Church*, should ever accomplish such a Design, notwithstanding all the Care and Jealousy of the rest; there is much stronger Reason to conclude, that a Cheat of this Nature, could never be carry'd on by *a Club of profess'd Enemies*, in spite of the Sagacity and Zeal of the whole Body of *Christians* in all Nations; who were deeply concern'd upon many Accounts, to see that they were not impos'd upon, in matters of such Importance.

## S E C T. XVII.

*Seventhly,* **T**O compleat the Argument, let any reasonable Man lay the following Considerations together, and then tell me, *Whether he can seriously believe, that the Christian World is abus'd, in taking the Books of the New Testament, for what they are generally believ'd to be.*

As these Books were first written in the most celebrated Language, then in the World; so they were quickly dispers'd abroad, and *translated* into a vast number of other Languages, very different

different from that, in which they were originally compos'd.

They have not been kept in private hands, as mysterious things, which Mankind were not to be acquainted with; but in *publick Repositories*, where all Persons might search and look into them.

The *Christians* have ever esteem'd them, as the grand Charter of all their Privileges, and the Foundation of their Hopes of Happiness in another Life.

They have been publickly cited and refer'd to, by the earliest *Writers* and *Apologists*, for the *Christian* Cause, nay, and by Enemies themselves; which had been intolerable Folly and Stupidity on both sides, if the World had not been well assur'd they were genuine.

They were (many of them) *directed* to large Bodies and Societies of Men, in different Parts of the World.

They have been *constantly rehears'd* in solemn Assemblies, besides being privately studied and discours'd of; by all which means, they must necessarily be impress'd on the Minds and Memories of Men.

All Factions and Parties of *Christians*, have unanimously agreed, to appeal hither, and decide their Controversies by this *Rule*.

No Notion of Forgery or Corruption, was ever advanc'd by such Delinquents as were excommunicated, and cut off from the Body of the *Christian* Church: Which Persons, as they could not avoid being led into the Secret, if there had been any such thing, while they continu'd Members; so they had the most urgent Provocations to reveal it afterwards.

The Doctrines they contain are not only new; but are of an *extraordinary Nature*, and such as challenge the Attention and Regard of all Mankind; and therefore in Reason, very likely both to attract the Curiosity of indifferent Persons, and to rouse the ill Nature of carping and contradicting Enemies, to inquire into, them, and sift them thorowly.

Besides, the Doctrines which these Books now shew us, are all of them such as suite perfectly well with the Design of such a Religion, as the *Christian Religion* is. They suppose a *crucify'd Saviour*, and Salvation by *Faith* in him; and administer such Comforts and Supports, as in the Nature of the thing, are the most agreeable and proper, for Persons who devote themselves, to the seeking of future Happiness, in such a way as the Followers of *Jesus Christ* do.

*Lastly*, Let a Man who doubts in this Case, put this Question to himself, and endeavour to resolve it fairly.

*Would those, who corrupted the Old, or forg'd a New Gospel, ever have made such a System of it, as that which is at this Day, and has been for so many Ages, receiv'd in the World?*

I dare say, no Man in his right Wits, can ever persuade himself to believe this: But from the very Scope and Matter of these Writings, as well as other Indications, will conclude, *that they cannot be the Work of any Impostor or Impostors, whatever.* But more of this by and by. So that upon the whole, from what has been said, I think we may (with sufficient Advantage) infer,

Coroll. 1. *That since these Books could not be counterfeited nor corrupted, the Matters of Fact;*  
and

*and the Doctrines contain'd in them, are the very same with what those antient Christian Writers, the Authors of them, did first give an account of to the World.*

Coroll. 2. *That there are no Writings any where extant (let them be of any Authors whatsoever) whose Purity and Genuineness are to be prov'd, by Arguments of so grand a Nature, and those so many in number, as may be produc'd in favour of the Books of the New Testament.*

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## S E C T. XVIII.

**B**UT there are those, who will be ready to ask, how this Discourse is reconcilable to what some have pretended to shew in Fact, *viz. That the Books of the New Testament have been tamper'd with, and abus'd, in many respects, since the time of their first Publication to the World.*

I answer, tho there have been some, who have taken no little Pains to lessen the Credit of these Books, by raking up all the little Faults they could possibly light on; nay, and even mentioning more than they dare stand by, were the matter to be well look'd into: However, my Assertions are no way inconsistent with the Discoveries, resulting from their laudable Endeavours; but may very well be reconcil'd to them, as will be sufficiently plain, by comparing the utmost they can pretend to prove, with what we make no scruple of granting.

For when I speak of these Writings being genuine and uncorrupt, I don't intend hereby, that they have undergone no Alteration or Corruption,

tion, in trivial Matters; that is, in things which are not of the Substance of them. I don't suppose, that every Letter, Syllable, or Word, is exactly the same, as when the last Hands of their respective Authors were set to them. The Learned know well enough, that there are multitudes of ways, by which Books may be abus'd, and that perhaps no Book in the World, of any moment, has ever escap'd this Fate, but had its share of Corruption (the common Calamity) at one time or other, either more or less. They know how Writings may be worn out, and *defac'd by Time*, the great Consumer of all things; as well as to what Injuries they may be expos'd, by the other ordinary Accidents of Life: How easy 'tis for Mistakes to arise, from the bare *Omission of Points of Distinction*; or from the *Use of Symbols and Characters*, or any sort of Contractions and Abridgments in Writing: How he that dictates to another, may possibly not *judg rightly* of several Letters, whose Beauty is either lost by Age, or perhaps were but basely written at first: How we may *mistake those Letters*, which are of a resembling Figure and Shape, one for another: How unaccurately and imperfectly he may *pronounce his Words*, and so lead him who transcribes into an Error; or perhaps seeing the very same Word or Words, various Times repeated, might heedlessly skip from one to the other, and so *leave out* all in the Author, that was between them; or perhaps, for want of Skill and Judgment in the matter he is concern'd in, may *transfer ordinary Notes and Glosses from the Margent, into the Text or Body of the Book*. The Learned know likewise, that those who write, as well as those who dictate, may fall into many sorts of Blunders



ders and Mistakes. They may *hear* what is dictated to them, imperfectly and by halves; they may be more intent upon some Notions in their own Minds, than the Business lying before them; and so write, not so much what they hear, as what they are at that time thinking of; or at least, may possibly shape and modify what they hear, too much according to *their own way of speaking and thinking*; but above all, by want of Skill in *Grammar*, and especially the Knowledge of the antient *Orthography* (by which means, all the changes in the Forms of Letters, would be unknown to them) 'tis not unlikely that many such Errors should be committed, as would require some Skill and Judgment to discover and correct afterwards.

I need not add, that the Carelessness of those who have the Inspection of Libraries, the rash and presumptuous Attempts of *Criticks*, the sly and villanous Practices of *Impostors* (in some Circumstances) may be the occasion of Mischief and Disorder this way.

All these things must be allow'd, because they are certainly true in Fact, as might easily be prov'd, if this were a proper place for it. Now, upon these and such like Considerations, I very easily allow, that the Writings of these old *Christian* Authors, might in process of Time, be expos'd in some measure, to the ordinary Fate of the World. I mean, that some such *σφάλματα* may have crept into them, as are very possible, and likely to arise from some or other of the foremention'd Causes. But what will any Man infer from this? We all agree, that this derogates nothing from the Credit and Authority of any Writing. We don't reject a Book as spurious, because we have some Proofs  
of

of its having suffer'd in matters of less moment. For if we should proceed upon that Principle, 'tis demonstrable in Fact, *That we should leave our selves no Authors to read or quote; but must abandon them by whole Catalogues to the Flames, even those whose Authority we now lay the greatest Stress upon, and think it infinitely ridiculous to question.*

I must therefore make a stand here, with this Conclusion, before I proceed any farther, *viz. That we must either not reject the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, as spurious, or fundamentally corrupted; upon the account of such Faults as we find to be common with them, and the Works of other Authors, which we receive as genuine: Or else, We must agree to reject both one and the other; and so, together with the New Testament, deny the Credit of all Books, that we cannot demonstrate to have been less abus'd, than that System of the Christian Religion has been.* And if so, I believe I may safely ask the Criticks, and all those Men, whose Learning lies only in great Reading: What is become of all your boasted Knowledg, and to what purpose have you spent your Time, in poring upon a parcel of old Authors, which you are perfectly cheated in, and who never talk'd any of those things, which you so much value and admire in them?

So that therefore, laying all these matters together, the many ways that there are, by which Writings may come to contract Faults, as also what has actually come to pass in the certain Abuse and Corruption of Books, which celebrated Men of Old \* have so freely own'd, and so much

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\* ΒΙΒΛΙΟΠΩΛΑΙ ΤΙΝΕΣ ΓΡΑΦΕΥΣΙ ΦΑΥΛΟΙΣ ΧΡΩΜΕΝΟΙ, ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΣΤΕΛΛΟΝΤΕΣ, &c. Strabo speaking of the Works of

much complain'd of: It would be an indiscreet and ridiculous piece of Zeal, to say, that every Letter and Word of these Evangelical and Apostolical Books, had been preserv'd in the same good Order and Purity (with which they were at first compos'd) thro all the succeeding Ages and Revolutions of the World, down to the present Time. On the other hand, I am very ready to allow, *That they may in length of Time, have suffer'd some of those common Misfortunes, which Books have always been expos'd to, ever since there have been Books in the World.*

But then, what I affirm is this, *viz. That those Writings, which are now in our Hands, are the very Writings which the Apostles and Evangelists left behind them; and that not only as to the main Matter and Substance of them; but also as to all Circumstances of necessary Moment, to Christian Doctrine and Practice: So far are they from being the Inventions of other Persons, impos'd upon the World in their Name and Stead.*

And this appear'd to be such plain and undeniable Matter of Fact, in some of the past Ages of *Christianity*, that the most virulent Enemies then in being, cou'd not possibly refuse granting it; or at least intimating it in such manner, as evidently shew'd they took it for a certain Truth. Thus \* *Julian* (who seem'd desirous to say something, that might render the

*Aristotle and Theophrastus, and the Abuses they had suffered.*  
Lib. 13. Pag. 419.

De Latinis vero [Libris] quo me vertam nescio, ita MENDOSE & scribuntur, & veneunt. *Cicer. ad Fratrem Quintum. Lib. 3. Epist. 5.*

\* Τὸν γὰρ Ἰησοῦν ἔτε Πᾶυλος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν Θεὸν, ἔτε Ματθαῖος, ἔτε Λουκᾶς, ἔτε Μάρκος, ἀλλ' ὁ χριστὸς Ἰωάννης, &c. *Cyril. contra Julian. Lib. 10. Pag. 327.*

Divinity

Divinity of *Jesus Christ* suspected) argues, That neither *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, nor *Paul* himself, ever presum'd to call him God; but 'twas *St. John* (ὁ γενεὴς ἰωάννης) that talk'd after this manner. Now how wrong soever he was in his Observation, yet his Concession deserves to be particularly taken notice of. For he lets us know here, that he took those Writings, which in his Time bore the Names of *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul*, to be the genuine Products of those Authors; or else there had been very little Sense, in his quoting them, to the purpose that he does quote them in this Passage. Now the *Emperor* was no Fool, whatever other ill Characters he justly deserv'd; and he was certainly very sensible, that the Evidences for the Genuineness of these Books, were at that time of day in the World, so very clear and convincing, that it would have been plainly scandalous for a Man to have call'd them in question: Or else he had run upon the *Christians* after another manner, and instead of citing these Books in so tame and innocent a way as he has here done, he would have expos'd them as so many Pieces of horrid Imposture, and the *Christians* as the worst of Fools for thinking otherwise.

All that I shall remark upon what has been said, is only this, *viz.* That if these Books were look'd upon as Authentick, even by the smartest and most industrious Enemies of Christianity, at that time (which was about the middle of the fourth Century) there is less Reason to suspect, their being either counterfeited, or fundamentally corrupted since. Because, as there have been fewer Persecutions, and much less profess'd Enmity to the *Christian* Religion in the World, since that time, than was before; so there have been more Oc-

casions for Mankind to search and enquire into them, as well as better Opportunities to vindicate and defend them.

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## S E C T. XIX.

**I** Know the idle Curiosity of some People, prompts them to argue here, from the common Opinion of the *Christians*, concerning the *Divine Authority* of these Writings.

Don't you think that Providence should have preserv'd Books of such a Character, as you say these are, free from all manner of Corruption? Should there not have been a Guard set upon them, that they might have pass'd pure and sincere, thro' all the Accidents and Revolutions of the World, even to the last Generation of Men? *Other Books are of no Importance to the Salvation of Mankind, as 'tis pretended these are;* and therefore one would think, these should never have been suffer'd to be treated so rudely as the rest, but have shone always in their own native Lustre and Purity, convincing the World thereby, of God's Care of them, and consequently of their Divine Original.

*Answ.* I confess indeed, this Objection looks plausible; but a Man would abuse it highly, that should complement it with the Name of a rational one, as reasonable as it appears.

Providence, I allow, would be concern'd to preserve a Divine Revelation, from all such Blemishes as should represent it *unworthy of God*, or render it *unfit for the Service of Mankind*, by abusing and disguising it so, that the Divine Will and their Duty, should not be known and collected



collected from thence with sufficient Plainness and Certainty. But when this is said and granted, there is all.

I hope these Gentlemen do not suppose, that God is oblig'd to be always working new Miracles, to do that which may be done in an ordinary way, by the bare Industry and Care of Mankind.

The first Publishers of a Divine Revelation to the World, ought to be inspir'd from Heaven; but that Inspiration was not to be continu'd to every *Librarian* or *Amanuensis*, to prevent their making Blunders, and stumbling upon one Letter, or Word, or Sound, instead of another. For Men may avoid these things of themselves, if they will but be Thoughtful and Diligent; and if they are not, I presume, we are not to throw their Faults upon Providence, and blame that, because these Men have neglected, either to study Languages, or to learn to read and write well, or to look after the Books committed to their Custody and Management, as they ought to have done.

*Infinite Wisdom* having adjusted and settled the general Laws of the World, and resolv'd upon such a Chain of Events, as should be the most beautiful and agreeable; permits things to go on, according to the ordinary Tenor of those Laws, without any miraculous Interpositions, except where it is requisite so to be, in order to the obtaining of some very valuable End, which cannot otherwise be obtain'd, or would be best obtain'd by the way of Miracles. And therefore, it was not necessary, that all those who should dictate or transcribe the Copies even of Divine Writings themselves, should be render'd infallible: That the Parchments they were writ-

ten on, should wear like Brass, and the Ink never lose its Strength and Colour: That any false Hand, attempting to abuse them, should be stop'd by a sudden Convulsion or Palsy; or that the great Turns and Revolutions of the World should be prevented; lest by such Combinations amongst Men, those Books should come by any Prejudice. Such effects as these are quite beside the Order and Constitution of the World, as God has been pleas'd to make, and does ordinarily govern it. What we may depend upon, from the Care and Direction of *Divine Providence*, in such an Affair, is this, *viz. That if God sent a Revelation of his Mind into the World, he would order matters so, that it should be preserv'd and continu'd, in such Circumstances, as 'twas fit and necessary a Divine Revelation should be continu'd in; as long as he determin'd to make use of it, for the Ends of Teaching and Instruction amongst Men.* And this well consider'd, will, I hope, be enough to make the Objection propos'd, appear to be no more than barely plausible.

But besides this, there is something else to be said in this matter, which I am apt to think, we ought to have some regard to. God, who has endow'd us with such excellent Powers of *Reason and Judgment* (which we are capable of using in so nice and critical a manner, in natural Enquiries, and all the common Affairs of Life) might very justly oblige us, to exercise that Reason to as good purpose, in the matters of our Salvation. He deals with us undoubtedly, according to the Capacities and Abilities he has furnish'd us withal; and having made us rational Beings, would have our Faith it self to be (in the sense I am now speaking of) a truly rational one. Why then, should we not be

be put to use our Reason, in judging of those Books which pretend to be *Divine*; as well as in judging of others? We can, in some Circumstances of Evidence, conclude a *profane* Author to be genuine, notwithstanding all the Corruption we are sure he has suffer'd. And Providence might very wisely and equitably appoint us to do the same Work, with respect to a Divine Revelation.

For by such a Dispensation, God shews, that he requires nothing of us, in order to a Conviction of his Truth; but that we act like Men, and use the Powers he has given us in such a manner, as they were plainly design'd for.

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## S E C T. XX.

**H**AVING thus shewn, upon what Grounds we may satisfy our selves, of the Purity of the Writings of the *New Testament*; as also, that they are the genuine and undoubted Works of such and such Authors, whose Names they bear, and who liv'd in the most early Times of *Christianity*: I may now safely proceed to make use of them under this Notion, as I have occasion; *not appealing to them, as Books that contain any thing of Divine Revelation, but as ordinary Writings*, which I may consult and refer to, in the way of Discourse, as I would those of any other Author whatsoever. And tho the same things which these Writers say, be also said by many others besides them; yet they being the first, and those consequently, from whom all other *Christian* Historians have had their Accounts; it is most expedient, that we go to the Fountain-head,  
and

and take our Informations immediately from them.

And now the Business which lies before us, is to propose, examine, and argue, upon the Evidences, which are brought to persuade the Belief of the Fact of *Christ's Resurrection*.

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## S E C T. XXI.

**A**ND the first general Head that I shall insist on, shall be that, of the *Characters, Qualifications, and other Circumstances relating to those Persons, who declar'd themselves the Witnesses of this Fact*.

Now here are many things to be consider'd, which I shall therefore propose, with as much Clearness and Brevity as I can, without doing the Argument an Injury.

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## S E C T. XXII.

First, **B***esides the Apostles (who were in a more eminent manner, the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ) there were divers others, who did unanimously agree, in testifying this thing to be true.*

Their number was so far from being small, and despicable, that one of the *Christian Writers* (who stiles himself the *Apostle of the Gentiles*) assures us, That in his Time there was still remaining the greater part, of more than five hundred, who did all at one time, see *Jesus Christ* after his rising again.

Now

Now tho this Article (of the *Number* of Persons who are the Witnesses of a Matter of Fact) abstracting from all other Considerations, is not in it self absolutely convincing and conclusive; yet it carries something along with it, that makes a mighty Impression on a Man's Mind that considers it well. For tho an Imposture may lie conceal'd for a while, in a few Hands; yet 'tis next to impossible, that it should lie long undiscover'd in a great many. It shocks a Man to think, that so many Persons should agree in all the Punctilio's of a notorious Lye, and that they should agree to stand by it in so peremptory a manner as these Persons did: That such a number of false Hearts and Tongues should so exactly keep time with one another, and never clash in any Instance whatsoever; but by a perfect Harmony and Consent, delude the World into a Belief of the Truth of what they affirm'd. It's commonly observ'd, that Plots never thrive so well, as when there are but few let into the Secret; and large Cabals of Knaves and Lyars, seldom fail to tell Tales of one another.

However, all that I insist upon from hence, is this, *That there is at least, a good degree of Probability, that the Testimony concerning Christ's Resurrection was not a false one, arising from this Consideration; That it was not one or two only who gave this Testimony, but a Number far superior, to what the Credit of some of the most valuable accounts of Matters of Fact in the World have depended upon.*

This is what I don't beg, since 'tis easy enough to make out the Truth on't; and I believe, these Gentlemen will hardly demand of me, a Proof they know to be so very obvious and near at hand,



I am well contented therefore, to have advanc'd thus much, in the first place. If they think it but a little, I desire they would have patience, to go on calmly to the succeeding steps; and I am much mistaken, if they don't find the Argument to run on to a sufficient Length, by that time we have done with it.

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## S E C T. XXIII.

Secondly, **T**HE Testimony of those Persons deserves the more regard, in that they testify'd a thing which they declar'd they had personal Knowledge of.

Now in any Case, when a Man pretends to sensible Demonstration for the Truth of what he says, he is to be heard with a great deal of Attention; and unless he has upon some other accounts, given Mankind just ground, either to suspect or despise him, 'tis enough to make all sober People conclude, that there is something in the matter which deserves to be seriously enquir'd and look'd into. But when a great Number of Persons shall come, and attest with one accord, that they were actually Eye-Witnesses to such or such a thing, and are as much assur'd of the Truth of it, as they can be of any thing which their Eyes discover to them every Day in the World: This will make all Men in their right Senses, see an absolute Necessity, either of receiving their Report as true, or else of alledging some very substantial Reasons for the rejecting of it. Now this is the Case here. These Persons did not only see *Jesus Christ*; but many of them declare, that they saw him frequently  
and

and familiarly, and that for such a term of Time, as can leave no room to doubt, whether Fancy and Imagination had any thing to do in the Business or no: They convers'd with him for forty Days; they eat and drank with him; they saw him do several wondrous Works; they receiv'd Orders and Instructions from him, about the Institution and Government of his Church: he bid them *go teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things that he had commanded*; and in so doing, he promis'd them his Presence and Blessing; *that he would be always with them to the End of the World, and send the Promise of the Father upon them*; and therefore commanded them, *to tarry in the City of Jerusalem, till they were endu'd with Power from on high*: He told them expressly, that Signs should follow those that believe; *that in his Name they should cast out Devils, speak with new Tongues, take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it should not hurt them*; that they should have the Gift of miraculous healing, so that *if they laid their Hands on the Sick, they should recover*: They declare that he upbraided them with *their Unbelief and Hardness of Heart*, in not believing the Reality of his *Resurrection*, upon the Testimony of those who had seen him; and that one particularly, who was incredulous beyond all the rest, was indulg'd so far, as to have all the Demonstration, that seeing, hearing, and feeling could afford him, in order to his satisfaction: That they were bless'd and comforted by him, and after they had receiv'd his last Commands and Directions, saw him actually taken up from them, and ascend into Heaven; and that after this they return'd to

*Jerusa-*

*Jerusalem*, and waiting there according to his Appointment, they were endu'd with Power from above, receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost, according to his Promise. This is what these Persons testify'd.

Now, here is no room for *Imagination* and *Dream*, in all this Account. Men could never fancy that they saw a Person for so many Weeks together, whom they never saw at all; that he eat and drank in their Presence; that he argu'd and expounded the Scriptures to them, convinc'd them of several Errors and Mistakes, gave them Promises, Rules and Instructions for their own Comfort, and the Government of a Church in the World; and after all, went up into Heaven in their sight, whilst Angels stood by and told them, *that he which was taken up into Heaven, should come in like manner again, as they had seen him go from them*: This, I say, could never possibly be Dream and Fancy. So that if this Testimony of theirs were false, nothing remains but they must be notorious Cheats, and all this Story a pure Forgery, a mere Lye from one end to the other. And therefore, what we have farther to do, is to see what Reasons we have to believe, or not believe, *That they were really Men of so profligate a Character, and did absolutely abuse Mankind in this Account they gave, of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

## S E C T. XXIV.

Thirdly, **T** *Herefore the manner in which this Testimony was deliver'd, engages a high Degree of Attention to it.*

There

There could be nothing more *solemn and awful*, than the way wherein the Apostles address'd themselves to Mankind, when they testify'd the *Resurrection of Christ Jesus*.

They declar'd they did this not of themselves; or from any inferior Motives and Incitements, but by God's Order and Appointment. They invoc'd his tremendous Name, and beg'd his Assistance and Blessing. They appeal'd to him, as the Omniscient Judge of the World, concerning the Sincerity and Integrity of their Hearts. They propos'd their Doctrine, as the Word and Law of God, by which they themselves, as well as those that heard them, were to be sav'd. And as all this was done with the utmost possible Gravity and Seriousness; so for a Confirmation of the Truth of all, they declar'd they had receiv'd from Heaven, *a Power of working Signs and Wonders*; to the plain and visible Effects of which, they refer'd their Hearers; as Proofs that God was with them of a truth, and that they were authoriz'd by him to do what they did.

Now such solemn Appeals to, and Invocations of the Divine Majesty, so publickly, so frequently, and so devoutly made; are certainly, at least, equivalent to any thing of religious Oaths or Swearing, ever us'd amongst Mankind, in order to procure a Belief of the Truth of what is asserted. And we know, that such Forms of Address to God Almighty, are held so sacred amongst all People; that they pass for undisputed Proof in Cases of Fact, where plain and evident Reasons to the contrary do not appear. And very good Reason there is, why it should be so; for it is not to be presum'd, that Men would be so wicked, as to *disavow the Divine Mercy*

*Mercy and Clemency, and imprecate the Divine Vengeance on themselves,* upon any such little Motives as they can have presented to them, in any of their Concerns and Dealings with one another. There is indeed no doubt to be made, but some Men have been actually thus profane and irreligious, as having no Notions at all of the Divine Being, or his fearful Judgments: But this is no Objection at all. For as the secret Atheism and Wickedness of Mens Hearts, can be known only to God himself; so unless we see some manifest Signs, or have some sufficient Proofs of such a vile Temper, by which those Persons have justly forfeited our good Opinion of them; we are not to presume it, but on the other hand to suppose, they have a just Regard to God Almighty, and do consequently speak the Truth, when they make use of his Holy Name, upon such important Occasions.

Now, I say, this being the Case here, the Apostles Testimony concerning the *Resurrection of Christ*, deliver'd with such Confirmations to the World, does certainly deserve the highest Attention and Regard; and what I plead for on this score, is what is allow'd to be just and reasonable, amongst all Nations whatsoever.

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## S E C T. XXV.

Fourthly, 'TIS to be consider'd too, *That these Persons did not talk of a matter that was transacted at a Distance from the Place where they gave their Testimony, nor a long Time after the thing it self was said to be done.*



I confess, a Story concerning some strange and wonderful thing, reported to be done in a remote Country, and a considerable number of Years, before the Account of it was publish'd to the World; may in some Circumstances, be justly liable to Objections, upon the score of the want of Opportunity, to make the necessary Enquiries into it: But the Case is quite otherwise here. These Men appear'd upon the very spot, that was the Scene of the Action, and told the *Jews* they might be satisfy'd of the Truth of it, even at their own Doors. *Jerusalem*, the very Place of our Saviour's Crucifixion and Death, they constantly affirm'd to be the Place, where he rose again. And as they did not send People a great way to enquire, so neither did they defer the Publication of it till *Jesus Christ* was forgotten, and his Story worn out, in the Country where they preach'd his *Resurrection*. But instead of that, they did it while it was fresh, and in the Mouths of all Men, and while those Persons, who could easily convict them for Cheats and Impostors (if they had been so) were ready to be produc'd, if occasion serv'd. I will not prevent my self here, by saying what will come with more Advantage under another Head. Only this I shall say, that *the Death of Christ was so publick a thing*, and there were so many acquainted with all the Circumstances of that Tragedy, some of whom were deeply concern'd too, to have prevented his rising again, if any Human Art or Care could have hinder'd it; that Men who made so much haste, to preach that surprizing and unwelcome Doctrine of his being actually risen again, would have found Enemies enough to confront them, and prove them Lyars, if they had not had evident Truth of their side.

## S E C T. XXVI.

Fifthly, **T**HEY did not make a Secret of this Business, but declar'd it in the most publick and open manner that could possibly be.

It was not a Story privately whisper'd amongst themselves, or communicated only to those of their own Party; but they proclaim'd it in the Ears of all the People, and chose such a Time to begin, wherein Jerusalem being croud'd with Foreigners of all Nations, there was no want of Persons, able and curious enough, to enquire into the Truth of the strange Report they made. So far were they from any sly and clandestine Management in this Case, that they went into the Synagogues of the Jews, nay, into the Temple it self (where there was no likelihood of a thin Auditory) and preach'd the Resurrection of Christ. And as if it was intended, that all possible Objections should be taken off, which might seem to intimate their being afraid of great Men, and that they address'd themselves only to the Mob upon this Occasion; they appear'd in the most august Councils of the Jews, and testify'd to the Faces of the High Priests and Rulers, what they had taught the common People before. 'Twas a very remarkable Speech, which St. Peter made to this purpose, in one of those grand Assemblies: Ye Rulers of the People, and Elders of Israel! If we be this Day examin'd of the good Deed done to the impotent Man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known to you all, and to all the People of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified,

whom

*whom God raised from the Dead, even by Him, doth this Man stand here before you whole. This is the Stone, which was set at nought of you Builders, which is become the Head of the Corner. Neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is no other Name under Heaven, given amongst Men, whereby we must be sav'd.*

What Freedom and Spirit appears in every Line of this Discourse? No Man sure can charge the Apostles, with making a Secret of *Christ's Resurrection*, when they dar'd proclaim it with so much briskness, to those who had been the Authors of his Death. A Man can scarce forbear thinking, how the Council look'd, upon this bold Charge; so many grave, wise and learned Seniors, as there were of them, to be thus attack'd by two ignorant and illiterate Men! The Author of that History tells us, *that they marvell'd*: And well they might; for, besides that the Subject of the Discourse was very ungrateful to them, they expected, as Men of Figure and Grandeur, to be address'd to with more Ceremony and Respect. Yet this was all the Complement they had, to be told, *They were the Murderers of Christ; and that God has rais'd him up from the Dead, to be the universal Lord and Saviour of the World.* Sad Tidings to those who stood in defiance of him! And the more provoking too, in that they were told of it in the Presence of all those People, who following their Example, had condemn'd him for an Impostor.

And very strange it was, that the Council should let the matter pass as they did. Could not they have reply'd to the Apostles? — *You make a Noise about a thing, which the whole Nation knows to be an egregious Cheat — You pretend that Christ rose from the Dead, when here is*

plain and undeniable Proof, which shall presently be produc'd to you, that there were was no such matter, but you by some deceitful Arts, convey'd his Body away! Such a Declaration as this, back'd with answerable Proof, and such bold Management, as always accompanies Truth and a clear Conscience; would have effectually silenc'd these Preachers, and put a final stop to the Progress of their Religion. But instead of this, they sneak, and grow cool upon the matter; the whole Council is confus'd, and they order the Apostles to withdraw, while they lay their Heads together, and agree upon some proper Answer to be return'd to them. And at last, as the result of all their Consultations, they command them to speak no more in the Name of *Jesus*, threatening them with their Resentments if they did, and so thought fit to dismiss them: Which is the very thing, that Men conscious of the Truth, and Self-condemn'd, would have done in the same Case. However, the Apostles, little regarding these Injunctions, went on with their Work; and quickly gave the Council a fresh Occasion to call them in question, for their Disobedience. And *St. Peter* (as the Mouth of the rest) gave such Reasons why they disobey'd, as those great Men could by no means digest, but were extremely uneasy under. *We ought to obey God, rather than Men. The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged upon a Tree. Him hath God exalted with his right Hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of Sins. And we are his Witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

This short Sermon (says the Historian) cut them to the Heart, and they took Counsel to slay them. A  
most

most effectual way of answering Arguments, to *execute* those, who drive them on too far! However, they contented themselves with less Severities for that time; and having beaten the Apostles, sent them out of the Council, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of Jesus*; and assur'd even by the Confession of the High Priests themselves, that they had fill'd all Jerusalem with their *Doctrine*.

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## S E C T. XXVII.

Sixthly, **T**HESE Persons were such, whose  
 \* *Probity and Vertue, their worst Adversaries never did* (and therefore for certain never could) *pretend to call in question.*

That they were reproach'd and vilify'd by the World, is indeed very certain; but this was what they were forewarn'd of, what they expected themselves, and what their *Doctrine* would naturally produce. But what I intend is, that no Adversary whatever, ever made an offer to shew the World, *that they were ill Men.* And I think, I rightly infer from thence, *that therefore they could not.*

For Men in such Circumstances, as the first Preachers of this *Doctrine*, were not to expect any thing of Ceremony or Compliment; but had there been any grounds to suspect their good Manners and Veracity, we may conclude, Mankind had not fail'd to know it. Because, all

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\* Τὸν βίον ἀνδρῶν κενθραυτοῖς, καὶ ἀρετῇ πᾶσι τὰς ψυχὰς κηκοσμημένοι. Euseb. de Apostol. Hist. Eccles. Lib. 3. Cap. 24.



imaginable Reasons of Interest and Policy, engag'd their Enemies to do what could be done, to stop the Progress of *Christianity*; which if it prosper'd, would infallibly † subvert all the Laws and Customs which they and their Ancestors, had so great a Fondness for. Now nothing would more effectually have dash'd this *New Religion*, and consequently have secur'd the *Old* ones from the Encroachments of it; than to have made it apparent, that the first Spreaders thereof, were Men of vicious Lives and Principles, and in reality, infinitely far from all that Sanctity and Devotion they so much pretended to.

Besides, 'tis a remarkable Instance, that we have in particular, of the Integrity and Candour of these Persons, that they do not scruple to take notice of the common Infirmities of Human Nature, in one another: that they speak so sparingly in their own Praise, and enlarge so little on the Vices of their Adversaries, under all the Provocations they had to the contrary.

They needed not to have told the World, their own Doubts and Fears, about the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*; how they doubted before, and how they doubted afterwards, even while they were looking on him: Nor would they have done thus, if they had been arrant Cheats and Impostors. No! They would have kept all that to themselves, as not possible to be of any use to an impious Cause. Whereas, these and other Instances, of their free, open, and impartial Management, evidently discover good Temper, Modesty, and a strict regard to Truth, which are the Qua-

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† *Odio dignus est (videlicet Christus) quod ex orbe religiones expulit, quod ad Deorum cultum prohibuit accedi. Ita Ethnicus apud Arnob. Lib. 2.*

fications we always look after, in order to the reposing a Confidence in any Person.

## S E C T. XXVIII.

Seventhly, **T**HEY were Persons of mean and vulgar Circumstances, in all respects.

I speak here chiefly of the Apostles, of whom we have the largest and most particular Accounts.

They were not bred up in Courts, or ingag'd in such a way of living, wherein the Arts and Intrigues of the World were either taught or practis'd.

They were not Men of polite Conversation, that by the Helps of Philosophy and Elegancy of Speech, were able to insinuate a Fondness, and raise an esteem of themselves, in the rest of Mankind. But their Discourses were plain and homely \* ; as well as their Education and Condition in the World, such as could neither prompt their Ambition, nor qualify them for great Attempts.

'Tis true indeed, there was one particularly (I mean *St. Paul*) who must be excepted ; as being a Man of very polite Learning, and well acquainted with the World : But this shews, that as *Christianity* was far from being incompatible with refin'd Sense and Knowledg ; so the Author of it, tho he would make no use of Human Learning it self, in the Propagation of

\* Τῶν δὲ γλωττῶν ἰδιωτεύοντες, τῇ γε μὴν πρὸς τὴν ζω-  
τῆς αὐτοῖς δεδορημένην θείαν καὶ ἀεθλοζώουσαν δύναμιν παρ-  
σέντες, τὸ μὲν ἐν αἰσινόει καὶ τέχνῃ λόγων τὰ τὴν Διδασχαλῆ  
μαθήματα προσδίδοντες ἕτε ἥδεσαν ἕτε ἐνεχείρουν. Euseb.  
Loc. ult. citat.

his Religion, yet was pleas'd to take away a stumbling Block from the perverse and froward World, by making use of a learned Man.

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## S E C T. XXIX.

Eighthly, **T**HEY could not possibly have any *secular Interest in view, by preaching such a Doctrine as this to the World.*

This is so true, that it is very evident on the other hand, that to act such a part as they did, was going against all the Rules of worldly Interest and Policy: And 'tis impossible, they should ever have had any Prospect before them from the World, but what must be very frightful and discouraging. Here was a Company of Men (who made as mean and ordinary a Figure, by the accomplishments of their Minds, as by their outward Port and Behaviour) and they come and give a strange account of *Jesus Christ, viz. How that after a cruel Death, which the Jews put him to at Jerusalem, he was raised up again, by the mighty Power of God, and after some Time, carry'd up into Heaven, where he sat invested with Divine Glory and Majesty, having all things put in Subjection to him.* In pursuance of this Account, they challenge the Obedience of all Mankind to the Laws of this *Jesus*; declaring there's no Salvation but by Faith in him, and denouncing Threatnings, as well as promising eternal Rewards in his Name, to influence the World to give heed to their Message. They tell the *Jews*, they must believe on him, whom they had but a little before treated with the last Degree of Outrage and Contempt, and crucify'd as a Malefactor:

lefactor: That they must enter upon a new Worship and Service, of his Institution; be strip'd of all the Privileges of a separate and peculiar People, and compose one Church, in common with the Gentile World. They tell the *Greeks*, they must submit all their admir'd Wisdom and Philosophy, their Arts and Politeness, their Wit and Reasonings, to the Rudeness and Simplicity of the Gospel; and renouncing all the Ceremonies and darling Superstitions of their Religion and Education, hearken to the Foolishness of preaching about a crucify'd Saviour \*.

Now, such a Report as this, was not like to procure them the Favour and good Opinion, of any of those Persons they address'd themselves to. There was nothing in it that could serve to recommend them, either as Men of *Wit and fine Parts*, or of profound *Knowledg and Learning*, or of delicate Art and Invention. Indeed, had they come with a pleasant Story, that would have gratify'd the Curiosity, or flatter'd the Passions of Mankind; had they preach'd some refin'd Speculations in *Philosophy*, taught Men how to acquire Fame and Renown, or directed them to some extraordinarily grateful and pleasant ways, of passing their Time here in Life; it would have been natural to think they drove at some worldly Advantage, by feeding Men up with Fancies that would have been so entertaining to them. But instead of this, they advanc'd Notions that appear'd absurd and ridicu-

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\* *How great a stumbling Block, the infamous Death of our Lord was to the World, and how much objected to the Christians; Justian Martyr, Origen, and others have abundantly shewn.*

lous, in point of *Theory*; and with respect to *Practice*, were the most strict and severe imaginable. They told of nothing but Afflictions and Tribulations in the present Life, as the certain Portion of those, who should receive their Message. They laid down this for a fundamental Rule, which they publish'd without scruple, to all the World; That as the great Rewards of *Christianity* were in another Life, so no Man should ever be admitted to the Possession of them, who would not (when call'd to it) forgo all temporal Pleasures and Enjoyments, upon that score alone.

So that 'tis plain, to a Demonstration, these Men could not propose to themselves, by preaching this Doctrine, either to gain *Reputation* and Esteem, or to advance their *Fortunes*, or to make themselves any way *great and considerable* in the present World; and therefore, that they could have no secular Interest in doing what they did.

## S E C T. XXX.

*Ninthly, I* T is to be consider'd too, *That these Persons were all of them brought up, under the Prejudices of a Religion, vastly different from that which they pretended to establish in the World.*

It is well known, that the Apostles were all of them *Jews* originally; and as such, they had quite other Notions of the *Messiah*, than that he should ever die, or consequently rise from the Dead. 'Tis true, that they might have had different Notions concerning him, from the  
Writings



Writings of the Prophets, and particularly, the Book of *Esaías*; who has, in the most lively and affecting manner possible, describ'd his humble State and Sufferings. However, the common Opinion of the People of the *Jews*, was quite another way; and they look'd for a *Messiah* that should come with outward Pomp and Splendour, to make them the most happy and flourishing Nation of the Universe. And accordingly, 'tis notorious in Fact, that the Apostles and Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, had no manner of Apprehension, that he was to suffer things as he did, from the *Jews*; and were every whit as hard to be persuaded of the Truth of his *Resurrection*. Nay, tho it was affirm'd, upon the Testimony of Sense, by some of their own Company, that he was risen again, yet they continu'd incredulous, or at best doubtful and wavering: And it appears, that after all the repeated Assurances from those, who declar'd they had seen him, they were not satisfy'd, till frequent and familiar Conversation with *Jesus Christ* himself had dissipated all their Fears, and given them full Assurance of the Reality, of what they were afterwards to publish to the World. Now, when a Case goes no farther than barely this, *That those Persons, who are to be heard in a matter, are not prepossess'd and prejudic'd in favour of the Notions they deliver*; it is a very great advantage to the Argument, and adds a special Force to what they say. But when these same Persons shall be prejudic'd on the contrary side, and by their Education and Profession have entertain'd Hypotheses of quite another Nature and Tendency, than that which they advance; this goes a very great way towards the compleat Satisfaction of a Man's Mind, as to the Reality and Truth  
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of what they offer: in that it perfectly rids him of all apprehensions of Bigotry and Superstition, of fond regard to Teaching and Tradition, or the Opinions of those that went before, by which Men are frequently very much byass'd, and sometimes led to profess Opinions, which their Judgments never solemnly approv'd of.

But this is not all; for by preaching *Christianity*, they did not only go against the Prejudices of their Education, but also took a course, that had a direct and immediate Tendency, to subvert all the Religion and Discipline they had been brought up under. For tho *Christ* came not to destroy the *Law and the Prophets*; yet he came to abolish the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law, and to substitute another kind of Worship in the room of them. And therefore, as *Judaism* and *Christianity* could not stand together, but the one must fall, if the other kept its ground; so those Men are vastly less obnoxious to suspicion in this Case, in that they did not vent Notions that made for the Honour of their own Law and Institution, but such as would infallibly undermine and ruin both, if ever they got ground in the World.

## S E C T. XXXI.

Tenthly, **B**UT then it is farther to be consider'd, *How severe the Laws, both of the Jewish and Christian Religion, are against all kinds of Deceit, and particularly, against Forgery and false Testimony.*

*A false Witness shall not be unpunish'd, and he that speaketh Lyes, shall not escape. And (in the same Chapter again) — A false Witness shall not be unpunish'd, and he that speaketh Lyes, shall perish.*

*Lying Lips are an Abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly, are his Delight.*

*Wherefore, Putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour——*

*Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in, through the Gates, into the City; for without, are Dogs and Sorcerers, and Whoremongers, and Murderers, and Idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a Lye.*

So that if these Men did bear a false Testimony, in this Case, 'twas in plain and open defiance, not only of the Religion of their Education, but of that Religion likewise, which they took upon themselves, to be the Preachers of to Mankind, and by which (according to their own Doctrine) they were condemn'd to *everlasting Punishments*, for doing what they did. For they persisted in this Testimony to the very last; and if it were a Lye, they went out of the World with that horrible Lye in their Mouths. Horrible indeed! Since it was not bearing false Witness in an ordinary Case, between Man and Man, but bearing false Witness of the Great and Glorious God; in that they testify'd, he rais'd up *Jesus Christ* from the Dead, and gave them Power and Commission to preach that Doctrine to the World: All which (upon this *Hypothesis*) were notorious Untruths. And therefore they could have no hope of finding Mercy and Forgiveness at his hands; because, whatever Encouragements are given, by either of these Religions, to re-  
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pening Sinners, there is nothing but Wrath and Indignation threatned, as the Portion of those, who continue obstinate and impenitent. From whence it must follow, that (if they asserted, and stood in so vile a Falshood, in contradiction to Laws so very exprefs and severe, as these and many more to the same purpose are; and this too, in a Case of so great and important a Nature, wherein the Glory of God, and the Welfare of Mankind were so deeply concern'd) they could be no other than downright *Atheists*; Men that had no regard to God, nor no Notions of his Laws; no Sense of Right and Wrong, or Vertue and Vice; but Persons of the most deprav'd Tempers and Principles imaginable; and in a word, such, whom no Time or Age of the World ever could pretend to match for consummate Impiety.

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## S E C T. XXXII.

NOW, that they were not Men of such loose and degenerate Principles, is evident from this Consideration especially, *viz. That had they been such, they would never have given Mankind such Notions of God Almighty, nor taught such Rules of Duty and Behaviour, both towards him and the rest of their fellow-Creatures, as they did.*

For why should Men, who were so remote from any religious Sense of God themselves, be so very zealous and industrious to impress it upon the Minds of others; and teach them to love and fear him, with so much Care and Exactness, as the scope of all their Sermons and Writings shews us plainly they made it their Business to do? Can

Can there be any thing more lovely, than *their Descriptions of the Divine Goodness and Mercy*, and the Preparations made to render those, who are truly Pious and Good, compleatly happy after this Life? Can there be any thing more terrible, than what they have denounc'd of the Divine Justice and Vengeance against Sinners?

Let us but consider *the awful Solemnities of a Judgment-Day*, the final Separation of the Good from the Bad, with the impartial Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, so often talk'd of in the Gospel. Did they not tell the World, by these Doctrines, that God is Just and Holy, as well as Bountiful and Good; and that he is not to be trifl'd with, tho he infinitely values the Ease and Happiness of his Creatures? They represented him, as the Searcher of the Thoughts and Counsels of the Heart, and of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity; tho of so much Grace and Condescension, as to accept of Sincerity, and even to be pleas'd to dwell with the *humble and contrite Spirit*. They press'd it as his Will and Pleasure, that Men should deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live Soberly, Righteously, and Holily here: That they should be fruitful in good Works, and enjoying this World as if they enjoy'd it not, have their Affections and Conversations in Heaven: In short, that they should govern themselves by the exactest Rules of Integrity, Justice, Temperance and Charity, paying Love and due Regard to all; yea, seeking the Good of all, and even recompensing Good for Evil, to the worst of Enemies; that so by the practice of these Vertues, they might shew forth the Divine Purity and Benignity, and prove themselves to be the Children of God.

Now,



Now, I leave it to any Man to judg, whether *Atheism and forlorn Impiety*, would ever have produc'd such sort of Doctrines and Precepts as these are. Men that had been wicked enough to forge a Religion, and publish it in God's Name; would also have been wise enough to have made up their System after another sort of manner. For it was wholly at their own Choice, to make whatever they pleas'd of it at first; but why they should make such a thing of it, as they have, is what no Sense can ever account for. A *profane irreligious Disposition* could never possibly dispose Men to talk of God, and to recommend Vertue and Piety, with that Ardour and Concern which they do. And to clog a *new Invention* with such Duties, such Commands, and such Threatnings, as we find their Writings abound with; was not at all the way to make it grateful and palatable, to the corrupt Affections of Mankind. Nor could such Rules of Living and Behaviour, as they enjoin'd, ever possibly serve to promote the *Interest of Vice*, or to make Men loose and irregular; had they any such Intention as that. For these Rules are actually calculated, for the Suppression of Vice and Wickedness: and where they take place, so that Mens Tempers and Manners are duly influenc'd by them; it's plain they are made, what we must call Vertuous and Good; that is, they are fitted and dispos'd to behave themselves as reasonable Creatures ought to do, both towards God, and towards their Neighbour; and to manage their own Conversations decently and soberly in the World.

So that they could neither gratify their own Humour, nor please and flatter the World, nor obtain any wicked Purposes upon Mankind, by  
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putting their Religion into such a Dress as this. And therefore, from the very Matter and Scope of the Gospel, I conclude, *That the first Writers and Preachers of it, could not be Men of wicked and irreligious Principles or Designs; because, I say, they could have no possible End (upon that supposition) in doing what they did.* And to make them act without some End, is to make them Machines, and not Men.

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## S E C T. XXXIII.

*Eleventhly, IT is plain to a Demonstration, that these Persons heartily believ'd the Doctrines they preach'd to the World.*

The Proof of this arises from the Consideration of the Dangers and Sufferings they expos'd themselves to, upon that score; which, I judg, will be sufficient to clear the Point to all that are not obstinately bent, to think just the Reverse of what the generality of Mankind must and will conclude, in a Case of this nature. For, is it not an Argument, that Men are in good earnest, when they dare venture upon Torments and Death it self, to confirm what they say? I would fain know, what Motives an *Impostor*, plac'd in such Circumstances as the Apostles were, can possibly have, to persuade him to run upon such Extremities, in the Defence of what he knows to be a notorious Lye. I grant indeed, that a Man quite lost to all sense of Vertue and Goodness, and given up to reprobate and licentious Principles, may possibly bid defiance to some Dangers, in the way of maintaining a Notion, he even knows to be false; provided at

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the same time, he has a fair Prospect of gaining some very considerable Profit, or Reputation and Honour by it. And the reason is plain; for such a one, *having no fear of Punishment in a Future State, and being possess'd with a mighty Opinion of the present World,* may be induc'd to run some Hazards, in order to the obtaining those Advantages, which appear so very great and charming to him. But even such a Man as this, would certainly stop at Hazards; and not think it worth his while to run upon unavoidable Destruction in such a Cause. \* For when Life is gone, all is gone with him; and tho he has no Evil to dread, yet on the other hand, he has no Good to expect. And the Laws of Human Nature are so strong and binding, in this Case, *that no Man can ever persuade himself, to be willing to exchange a State of Good, he is in actual possession of, for a State, wherein he assures himself, he shall not be in a Capacity to relish either Good or Evil.* Upon which account, I believe, I may securely challenge any one, to produce out of any Age or History of the World, a single Instance of a Person, *not Lunatick or Distracted;* who ever carry'd the Jest so far, as to throw away Reputation, Fortune, Pleasure, and Life it self, to propagate a Cheat, which there was undeniable Proof, that he himself own'd and knew to be so. The Case is quite otherwise, with respect to such Persons, *who (howsoever deceiv'd and prejudic'd, yet) firmly believing their Opinions to be true,* make no scruple to expose themselves to the worst Extremities in the Defence of them. For the *Schemes* they have form'd to themselves,

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\* Τίς γὰρ φιλήσων ἢ ἀκροαίης, δύναίτο ἐν θανάτῳ ἀσπαζέσθαι, ὅπως ᾗ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὴν περιεργίῃ. Just. Mart.

furnish them with Notions that tend to their Comfort and Support; and tho other People think them grossly deluded, yet they may please themselves with the hopes of an After-Recompence, for what they go thro here. But a known wilful *Impostor* can have no *Scheme*, no Principles that he dare venture out of this World upon, as long as it is in his power to keep in it; and therefore, he will never be bold enough to act such a Part, as the first Preachers of the *Christian* Faith did, who had a thousand Terrors and Deaths in prospect every Day, and at last seal'd their Testimony with their Blood.

Now this being the Case, and it being evidently made out before, that the Apostles could not be Men of profane and irreligious Principles; but on the contrary (as appears both by their Doctrine and their Manners) Persons of most devout and serious Minds; no reasonable Man can avoid making this Conclusion, *That their Judgments were thorowly convinc'd of the Truth of what they deliver'd, and their Hearts, as well as their Tongues, were engag'd in that Work.* And therefore now, we have but one thing more to inquire into, with respect to their Characters; and that is, whether there be sufficient Grounds to believe, *That they were Men of competent Natural Understanding, and were not acted by Principles of Whimsy and Enthusiasm, but had a free Command of their Minds, by which they could manage themselves coolly and soberly, as other Men might do.* For when this Point is likewise clear'd, we shall have laid together all the *Data* which are necessary, in order to argue with Strength and Advantage, upon the Testimony they gave, concerning the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Therefore—

## S E C T. XXXIV.

Twelfthly, **A**ND Lastly, *As these Persons were no Impostors, so neither were they Foolish and Stupid, or Enthusiastical and Distracted; so that the Testimony they deliver'd, should fall under any manner of Suspicion, upon either of those Accounts.*

I take it for granted, that the way to determine, whether a Person be a *Fool* or a *Lunatick*, is to consider his Words and Speeches, his Actions and Deportment; and see whether they come up to that Standard of Sobriety and good Understanding, which is commonly allow'd of amongst Mankind, and by which Men are ordinarily judg'd, to be either sensible and in their right Wits, or else to be otherwise. And therefore, if upon a careful Examination, of what pass'd of this nature, amongst the Apostles, we find nothing but what will fairly stand the Test; we shall be oblig'd, by all our common Practice, and Notions of Things and Persons, to pronounce, that they were neither *Idiots* nor *Madmen*; but were at least so far the contrary, as was necessary, in order to prevent any Objections that might be started against their Doctrine upon that score. Let us therefore put the Question, *Did these Men ever do, or say any thing, which betray'd a Constitution, that might justly be suspected of any Defects of this kind?*

Are not their Discourses grave and well compos'd, full of Life and persuasive Eloquence; tho without elaborate Art and Study?

Did



Did they not converse with, preach to, and dispute amongst all sorts of People, even the most learned and polite, as well as the rude and ignorant? And was not this the way for Fools and Madmen to discover themselves, and let the World see what they were? 'Tis much, that no Person (amongst all those Crouds of *Jews, Romans, Greeks* and others, which daily surrounded them, in the Discharge of their Office) should have Sense and Sagacity enough to find out their weak Side; and by exposing the Idleness and Incoherence of their Talk, represent them as Subjects only for Mirth and Diversion, to the rest of Mankind. Instead of this, we find, that they expos'd the Follies and Errors of their most learned Adversaries to their very faces; and that in such a manner, as left them no room to answer or defend themselves. If at any time they undertook an Argument, they manag'd it with such Success, that those they had to do with, either chang'd their Opinions, and fairly own'd their Judgments convinc'd; or else, by their furious Resentments, express'd in the way of *railing, slandering, and raising Mobs*, plainly shew'd, they had been gravel'd and reduc'd to the last Distress. And what wonderful Effects had their Sermons upon the Minds of Men? At the same time, that they deliver'd their Doctrines, with a superior Authority and Command, they touch'd the softest Passions of Human Nature, and made such Alterations in the Tempers and Lives of their Auditors (the most of whom heard them, with a sufficient degree of Prejudice) that it may well be said of them, *Never Men spake like these*. Never did any *Philosopher, Orator, or Rhetorician*, speak to such purpose: Never had Wit and Learning such prodigious Triumphs, as the

Plainness and Simplicity of these Preachers. But as plain as they were, these things evidently shew, *that they neither sav'd, nor talk'd Nonsense to those about them.* For if it would not require clear and cool Heads, for Men to behave themselves at the rate they did, it is impossible to think, what Deportment could ever require such a Temper. So that upon the whole, no Man that knows how to judg of sober Sense and Capacity, by the common Rules of the World; can ever question, whether these Men were well qualify'd even in that respect, for the Work they were employ'd in.

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## S E C T. XXXV.

**T**HUS we have enquir'd pretty largely, into the Characters and Qualifications of those Persons, who set up for publick Witnesses of the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ.* Let us now see, what use is to be made, of what has been said.

The *Christians* therefore proceed to argue from these Particulars, after the following manner.

*First, They say, This Testimony of the Apostles, concerning the Resurrection of Christ, has all the plain Marks and Characters of Truth and Sincerity that any Human Testimony can possibly have.*

The Vertue and Probity of these Men, was beyond all Dispute. They were ignorant of the World, and unacquainted with the Methods of Wheedling and Intrigue; yet they discover'd neither Folly nor Lunacy in their Behaviour. They went against all the Prejudices of Education, and the Laws of worldly Interest. They never contradicted each other in their Accounts,  
or

or shrunk from their Testimony, for Fear or Favour. They were fair and open in all their Proceedings, and had no Followers, but those whom a convinc'd Judgment made to be so. They refer'd their Hearers to *Time, Place, Persons*, and all other Circumstances that could possibly make for their Satisfaction. In a word, what they testify'd, was not a matter of Tradition, but of *Sense and Experience*; and as they lost the present World, so they laid *Eternity* it self at stake, upon the Truth of their Testimony.

## S E C T. XXXVI.

**N**OW the Case lies here: Since 'tis demonstrated in general, at SECT. III, IV, V, VI. Part II. *That we are oblig'd to assent to some things as true, in Cases, where we have neither Sense nor rigorous abstracted Demonstration, to assure us of the Truth of them: Also since 'tis shewn (PROP. III. Part II.) That Testimony may be so circumstantiated, as to afford us a sufficient Degree of just and rational Security, that things are really so as they are represented to us: And again, at PROP. VIII. That our Assent in many of these Cases, may be, and is, attended with as little Doubt and Hesitation, as in those, where we have perfect and rigorous Demonstration, for the Truth of Things: Since these things are so, the Question is, Why should any Man refuse his Assent, in the present Case; or what valuable Reasons can be produc'd, for not admitting the Proof here offer'd, as just and sufficient?*

Is there any Circumstance, relating to the Account given by the Apostles, that renders it liable to a reasonable Suspicion?

Is there any one Circumstance wanting, which was ever requir'd by Mankind, in this sort of Proof? Should we look into the Practice of Nations, even the most polite and best taught in the World; we shall find, that their utmost Demands, in all matters concerning *Witnesses and Testimony*, fall vastly short of what the Case in hand furnishes us withal. Nay, 'tis evident, without farther Proof, than only comparing what has been already said, with plain Matter of Fact abroad in the World, *That amongst all the vast variety of Cases, wherein Testimony is ever made use of; there is no Case, wherein there is such a Concurrence of weighty and undeniable Circumstances, to persuade the Truth of a thing, as there is here.*

What then shall we say? There can be no Objection (that will hold) drawn, from any Topick that relates to the Characters or Management of these Witnesses. And 'tis absurd and irrational, to reject their Testimony, upon a bare *Physical Possibility of Deception* (by PROP. XII. Part II.) And Lastly, (by PROP. IX. of the same) *The Subject being of such a nature, as admits only of Moral Proof, altho it be of the greatest Moment and Consequence possible; yet we are not to make that a Reason, for refusing our Assent to such Proof alledg'd for it, as has all the Conditions ever requir'd, or made necessary by common Consent, and the Laws of the World, in order to our firm Belief, and Acquiescency in such a thing as true.*

And therefore, the *Christians* conclude here, *That if their Adversaries will not admit this Testimony, 'tis because they are govern'd by Humour and Self-will: They will not, because they will not; or because they have Reasons to themselves (such as can never stand the Test of a fair and impartial Examination) for their doing otherwise.*

And



And this is indeed what must ever be suspected to be the true State of the Case, and what lies at the bottom of all the Controversy, between them and the *Christians*.

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## S E C T. XXXVII.

**B**UT, Secondly, they say, *That to disown such a Testimony as this, is by Consequence to take away the Validity of all Moral Evidence.*

Now, by what has been shewn, in various Particulars, at Part II. it's certain and clear, beyond all Dispute, *That this sort of Evidence, is not to be taken away, nor the World ever to be brought to that pass, that Men shall admit of nothing as true, but what they have Sensible or Demonstrative Proof for.* And therefore, our Business is to see, whether any such Consequence will follow, from the disowning a Testimony, attended with such Circumstances, as that which we are now speaking of. For if it does, then I think there will scarce be room, for any farther arguing upon the matter.

Now that such a Consequence will follow, is thus plainly made out, from what was hinted occasionally in the *foregoing Section*. For if no Case occurring in Human Life and Affairs, wherein we are necessarily oblig'd to assent to things as true, be ever attended with Circumstances more considerable, both for Number and Quality, than this Case is; then to disown Moral Proof in this Case, will infer a necessity of disowning it in all others.

But the *former* is true: And therefore the *latter*.

There



There can be but two ways in Nature, to overthrow this Reasoning. The *one*, by shewing, that there are Cases, wherein we assent to the Truth of Things, as made out to us by *Moral Proof*; the Circumstances of which are superior, in both respects mention'd, to those of the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

The *other*, by shewing, that altho it should be granted, that there are no such Cases to be produc'd; yet that it will not follow, that to reject the Proof in the Case here alledg'd, will infer a necessity of doing it in all others, which are to be made out by the same sort of Proof.

It is indifferent to me, which end of the Argument, the incredulous Gentlemen please to take.

If they can shew any Case (or Cases) which has more Advantage in point of Circumstances, than this; I allow then, that it will not follow, *That to disown Moral Proof, in this Case, will infer a necessity of disowning it in all others*. Because, a superior Evidence may be admitted, when an inferior one is rejected. However, even supposing they could prove this; yet thus much will follow still, *viz. That Moral Evidence must be disown'd, in all Cases, whose Circumstances were but equal to those of the Case in hand, and much more in those, whose Circumstances were less considerable*. And these are so many, that I make no scruple to say, *That all Society and Commerce amongst Mankind, would be totally destroy'd; were Moral Evidence to be rejected, but in a very small number of them*: Nay, were *Moral Proof* to be disown'd, but in such Cases, where the Circumstances had not the hundredth part of the Advantage, which those, of the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, have been shewn to have; it might be demonstrated, *that no Business, Government, or Conversation, could be*

*be any where maintain'd, or carry'd on in the World.* So that this Point, if it were possible to be gain'd, would signify but little.

As for the other, *viz. The Sequel of the Argument*; I guess there may be some good Reasons, why that should pass without any Molestation, or Attempt to disprove the Truth of it. And indeed, it would be an Undertaking, very wonderful and odd, for a Man to endeavour to shew, *That tho there are no such superior Cases to be produc'd, yet it will not follow, that to disown the Proof in the Case here alledg'd, will infer a Necessity of doing it in all others, which are to be made out by the same kind of Proof.* For the plain English of this is, *I will not have it so, and therefore it shall not be so — I allow the Antecedent, but 'tis not for my turn to grant the Consequence.*

This indeed, puts an end to all Argument; and a Man that is come so far, must be complimented with the Character of Invincible.

## S E C T. XXXVIII.

**A**ND thus much may suffice for this first Head of Argument. However, before I enter on a second, I think it expedient to clear one Point by the way, relating to the Matter or Subject of the Apostles Testimony, which was a *Resurrection from the Dead*; a thing not only strange, but impossible to be effected by any mere natural Power. It is not my Province here, to enter upon any Discourse, of a *Resurrection* in general; or to shew the Folly and Blunders of the common Objections, that are started against it. May those People,  
who

who amuse themselves and others, with idle prating, of Contradictions and simple Impossibilities in this Case, come to a better Understanding, and learn to think more justly and decently, of the infinite Wisdom and Power of their Maker. My Concern is with the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, which according to the Accounts of the *New Testament*, was the third Day after his Death and Burial. And as the *Christians* believe his Body saw no Corruption, and the *Deists* will not pretend to prove it did; so the Case is clog'd with no other Difficulty, than barely that, of his being restor'd to Life again. And I believe it will be much at one to these Gentlemen, whether the Body of *Jesus Christ* did, or did not, see Corruption; if it be so, that the Apostles spoke Truth, in saying he rose from the Dead.

Now, what I would offer here is this, *viz.* That tho the matter of this Testimony, were of the most wonderful and surprizing nature; nay, a thing utterly impossible for any mere Physical Agent to bring about; yet this is not, in right Reason, any just ground for a Man's refusing to give Credit to it. I guess, the matter may stick pretty much hereabouts; and therefore, I shall endeavour to set this Proposition in a very clear Light.

For this end, I must beg these Gentlemen's Attention to the following Particulars, and the Argument deduc'd from them.

## S E C T. XXXIX.

First, **T**HE thing here spoken of, was infinitely easy for an Almighty Power to effect.

Secondly, There is no Medium or Principle, by which it can be shewn antecedently, that it was inconsistent with, or any way unbecoming, the Divine Perfections, for God to raise Jesus Christ from the Dead.

As for the First of these, I conclude, they will not make any words about it; because, how strange soever the thing be in it self, or however impossible to any second Cause; yet it is not of such a kind, as does in its own nature involve any thing of *Absurdity and Contradiction*. The Case of raising a Person from the Dead, or of re-animating a dead Body, does not amount to that, of making a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time; nor does it imply or infer, any thing that can ever be reduc'd thereto. So that these Persons have no room or pretence to object, that this Effect is to be reckon'd amongst those, which even Almighty Power it self cannot bring to pass \*. Tho by the way, I must say, we ought to be very cautious, when we talk of Impossibilities to God; as remembring, that many of those things, which are impossible to our utmost Power to effect, and to all our Saga-

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\* Τὸ μὲν καὶ τὸ δύναμιν, ὡς ἔστιν ἀρκῦσα πρὸς τὸ σωματικὴν ἀνάστασιν, δείκνυσιν ἢ τέτων αὐτῶν φύσεως. Athenag. de Mort. Resurrect. Pag. 151. Edit. Oxon. 1706. And the same again, Pag. 155. where he argues from the Divine Power and Wisdom.

city and Penetration, to conceive the Nature or Manner of; are very possible and easy with him.

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## S E C T. XL.

Secondly, **T**HERE is no possible Medium, by which it can be shewn, that it was any way unbecoming the Perfections of the infinite God, to raise Jesus Christ from the Dead.

That either God's *Holiness, Justice, Wisdom, Mercy, Goodness, or Truth*, must, or ought to have been a bar against this Work.

The old *Christians* reason'd after this manner, upon the Subject of a *Resurrection* in general; and I may as well apply it, to the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ* in particular; arguing with \* *Athenagoras*, if God would not do this Work, it must be because it was some way or other *unjust and unworthy of him*.

I grant indeed, if it could be fairly prov'd, that the *Christian Religion* were an Institution unworthy of God; that then it might be demonstrated *à priori*, that *Jesus Christ* could not be rais'd from the Dead, to authorize such a Religion in the World: because upon this *Hypothesis*, it must have been a mere *Imposture*, and therefore impossible ever to have had any Countenance from Heaven. But since the Religion it self is so far from being contrary to the Nature of God, that 'tis manifestly most agreeable to all his Perfections, as discover'd to us, by the *Light*

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\* Τὸ γὰρ ἀβέβητον, ἢ ὡς εἶπεν αὐτῷ εἶναι ἀβέβητον, ἢ ὡς ἀνάξιον, &c. *Athenag. Pag. 168.*



of Nature, and the Government of the World; 'tis plain, that no such Demonstration can ever be form'd. And therefore, I presume, we argue rightly, that there's no antecedent Conclusion to be drawn from any of the Divine Attributes, against the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

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## S E C T. XLI.

NOW from hence arises the Proof of the Proposition.

For were the Case put, concerning the Credibility of any Effect in general, pretended to be wrought by some certain Cause or Agent; if it were demonstrable, that this Effect were vastly short, of what the Virtue and Power of the Cause could produce; if it were demonstrable, that no Reasons *à priori* could be given, to shew that this Cause should not, or ought not to produce such an Effect: And Lastly, If there were plain and positive Testimony (unexceptionable in all other respects) asserting that this Effect was actually and really produc'd; there would be no just and valuable Reasons remaining, for any Man's disbelief, in such a Case. And therefore, how much soever this Effect might be above the Power of any Causes of an inferior Rank; it would be notoriously absurd and irrational, upon that score, to reject the Evidence, attesting the actual Production of it, by that other and more powerful Cause.

I need not make a formal Application of this, to the Case in hand; for every body will see, that it must hold with as much Reason here, where the Effect spoken of, is the *Resurrection*  
of

of *Jesus Christ*, and the Agent concern'd, an Infinite and Almighty Being: This Consideration being likewise taken into the Account, *That 'tis impossible to shew, why infinite Power should not have been engag'd in this Work; and that 'tis a palpable begging of the Question, to suppose any such thing, without first demonstrating Christianity to be an Imposture.* And this, I hope, may be sufficient to make out, that 'tis absurd and unreasonable, and a manifest Breach of the Laws of good arguing, to make the strangeness of the thing testify'd by the Apostles, a Reason for rejecting the Testimony it self. And this Consideration, added to those which went before, will compleat the first Argument.

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## S E C T. XLII.

Secondly, **A** Nother Head of Argument, which the *Christians* go upon, is, that of the certain and necessary Discovery of the Fraud, if the Testimony given by the Apostles, concerning the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, had been false.

If it be ask'd, how they prove, *That the Cheat must needs have been discover'd, if so be, this Account of Christ's Resurrection had not been a real Truth, but a mere Forgery of the Apostles:* I reply, they give the following Reasons for it, which all put together, will manifestly infer what they say. They argue therefore,

*First*, That the Apostles did immediately declare the thing.

*Secondly*, That they made this Declaration, upon the very Spot, where the thing was pretended to be done.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, That they did not whisper the matter, but proclaim'd it in the most open and publick manner that was possible.

*Fourthly*, That they did not begin to make this Report in some secret Corner, but in one of the most famous and publick Places of any in the World at that time.

*Fifthly*, That they made Choice of such a Season, wherein there was the greatest Concourse and Resort of all sorts of People thither; and therefore the greatest number of Hearers, and Inquirers into what they affirm'd.

*Sixthly*, That the profess'd Adversaries of this Doctrine, had many urgent and weighty Reasons, to persuade them to make their utmost Efforts, for the proving it false.

*Seventhly*, That they had as much Time and Opportunity, as could ever be desir'd, in order to the Discovery of the *Imposture*, if there had been any.

*Eighthly*, That they had likewise Power in their hands, by which they were enabled to examine all Persons and Things, which might any way conduce to the giving them Light into the matter.

As for the Truth of these Particulars, the *Christians* believe their Adversaries themselves are so thorowly appriz'd of it, or at least are sensible, that there are no Objections to be made in the Case, but what would be plainly scandalous, for Men that pretend to Reason, to make; that they have little apprehension of any Dispute arising upon that score. And indeed, I think, those Gentlemen (with all their Heat against *Christianity*) have hitherto been *so prudent, and so just to themselves*, as never to venture solemnly to call any of these matters into question: Nor do I believe, that any of them will ever think

it worth their while so to do. Especially, since there is so profound a silence as to these Points, amongst all the more antient Enemies of the *Christian Religion*; none of whom (that I could ever hear of) made the least doubt, whether Circumstances were really so or no.

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## S E C T. XLIII.

**N**OW the Question which arises here, is this, *viz. Whether some Testimony concerning Matter of Fact, may not be attended with such Circumstances; that if that Testimony be false, it should be morally impossible, but the Falshood should be discover'd?*

If it be deny'd, that any Testimony of Matter of Fact, may be attended with such Circumstances; then 'tis ask'd, *What there is in the nature of things, according to the present Constitution and Establishment of the World, that should be a Reason, why some Cases of Human Testimony, may not be thus circumstantiated?*

Those that affirm there are such Reasons, are oblig'd to shew them: The *Christians* say, there can be no such.

If it be granted, that some Testimony concerning Matter of Fact, may be attended with such Circumstances, *That if that Testimony be false, it should be morally impossible, but the Falshood should be detected;* then here are these two Questions farther, to which a distinct Answer is requir'd.

First, *What are the Qualifications or Conditions necessary, to render a Testimony such, as is here spoken of?*

Secondly,

Secondly, *What does this particular Testimony, concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, want of those necessary Conditions or Qualifications? If it wants any, shew what they are; if it does not, then assign some Reason, why you believe, That there were all the Conditions requisite to render the Discovery of the Fraud morally necessary and certain; and yet that it was not actually discover'd.*

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## S E C T. XLIV.

**I**N the mean time, depending upon the force of the Circumstances mention'd, we lay down this Conclusion, *viz. That there was in this Case, a Concurrence of all such Circumstances, as are in the nature of the thing, necessary and conducive, to the laying of a Cheat open to the World; and not only so, but they were such, as would have render'd the Discovery of the Fraud unavoidable, if there had been any to be discover'd. And we are the more confirm'd in this Conclusion, upon these two Accounts.*

*First, Because the common and constant Experience of the World shews, That fraudulent Intrigues and Cheats, are actually discover'd, in Cases, where the Advantages for laying them open, bear no proportion to what we find in the Case of our Saviour's Resurrection.*

*Secondly, Because the Deists cannot give an Instance of an Imposture, set afoot in any Age of the World, and attended with Circumstances of equal Moment to these, which ever yet escap'd being discover'd.*

So that the Result of the Argument, amounts to thus much.



*First*, That there is the *highest Degree of Moral Impossibility*, that the Testimony given by the Apostles, concerning the *Resurrection of Christ*, should have been a false one.

Now what grounds we have, for security in all Cases of this nature, where we argue (for example) *that 'tis morally impossible, that such or such a thing should ever be, or come to pass*; has been abundantly shewn, at PROP. II. Part II. to which I refer. And therefore, the stress of the Argument resting mainly there, I am under no doubt at all, of the *intrinsic Goodness and Sufficiency* of it. Nor indeed is there room left for any other Dispute in the Case; than *whether Mankind be led by such and such Principles, or be govern'd by such and such Laws, when they act as reasonable and sociable Creatures, yea or no?* Which is a Question, that I hope may easily be decided.

*Secondly*, That since the Reasons (why we assert, it was morally impossible in the highest Degree, that this Testimony should be false) are plainly deduc'd from the very nature of the Case it self, and moreover, back'd with Experience and evident *Matter of Fact*; the *Deists* will be oblig'd to coin a Set of new Principles, in order to give a fair and distinct Answer to what the *Christians* urge upon this Head.

For to do it upon any Principles, hitherto receiv'd amongst Mankind, they'll find not only *Morally*, but *Physically* impossible. And I guess, the difficulty will not be less, for them to invent, and introduce *new Principles* in their stead, such as the World will think fit to submit to. However, what remains for them to do, is either to invent *new Principles*, or else to solve the Business, by those hitherto receiv'd amongst Man-

Mankind: which are Tasks pretty nearly equal to one another.

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## S E C T. XLV.

*Thirdly,* **A** Third Topick which the *Christians* argue upon, is, *The Demonstrable Conviction, which the Jewish Nation lay under at that time, that Jesus Christ was really risen again.*

The Consequence of this Argument lies here, *viz.* That if a Body of People, who were the Murderers of *Jesus Christ*, and the avow'd Enemies of his Religion; who had so many Reasons to wish he might not rise again; so many Interests concern'd to engage them to hinder Mankind, from believing that he was risen again: And lastly, Who had all Advantages in their hands, that could be desir'd, to inform and assure themselves, whether he was risen again or no: If these Persons gave plain proofs, of their being convicted of the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*; the rest of Mankind can have no rational pretence, for the least Doubt or Scruple about it. And the Reason is, because no part of Mankind besides, can ever possibly have either the *Motives* or the *Advantages*, for inquiring into the matter, that the *Jewish Nation* had. Therefore, their Conviction, is a just Argument to us.

## S E C T. XLVI.

NOW 'tis easy to shew, upon plain and obvious Principles, *That the Jews were infallibly convinc'd of the Resurrection of Christ.*

In order to this, I suppose it will be granted, *That when two Parties of Men stand at the highest degree of Opposition to each other, if the one asserts and publishes a Matter of Fact, which is of the highest Moment, and absolutely destructive of the Interests of the other, and is not so palpably false, as to carry the plain Marks of Spite and Revenge, or study'd Slander and Scandal along with it; that then, if that other Party, upon whom this Charge is made, does not in as solemn and publick manner refute that Charge, or do something in their own Vindication; which in the Judgments of Persons, not bias'd or prejudic'd either way, shall bear some proportion to the Attack made upon them: That then (I say) they tacitly acknowledg the Truth of what the accusing Party alledg against them, and so by Consequence give up the Cause.*

For the reason of this, I refer to what is discours'd at the latter end of PROP. II.

Now the Case lies here: The Writers of the Gospel-History, did in exprefs Terms publish to the World, *That the Jews brib'd the Soldiers to report, that the Body of Jesus Christ was stolen away by his Disciples.*

This was a home Charge; and such as, if true, shew'd the Jews to be the most degenerate Wretches under Heaven.

For here they trampled upon all the Obligations of Conscience and Religion, and set themselves

selves to fight against Truth, and even against God himself, that they might carry on their Prejudices against *Jesus Christ*, and the *New Religion* instituted by him.

Now for the Evangelists to record it in their History (and that, but a very little Time too, after *Christ's* Death) that the *Jews* were guilty of this horrid and abominable piece of *Forgery and Bribery*; to tell the World, that they acted so foul and so sordid a part, as to tamper with the Soldiers, and put them upon spreading about a thing, which they knew in their own Hearts to be a notorious Lye: This was to paint them out to the World, in the very worst Colours that Men could be painted in, and expos'd the Cause they maintain'd, as desperate and forlorn to the last degree.

Now that this Charge was neither so evidently false, as to carry its own refutation along with it, nor yet the Effect of Spleen and Revenge, because the *Jews* had crucify'd *Jesus Christ*; will be apparent to all People, that will but use their Understandings as they ought to do, in looking over the Circumstances of the Case, and the *Jews* Management upon this Occasion.

The thing, as recorded by the Historian *Matthem*, was thus.

*The Watch who were set to guard the Sepulcher of Christ, being terrify'd by the awful Appearance of an Angel of God, and the Earthquake which attended his Descent from Heaven; come into the City, and tell the Chief Priests, what things had pass'd. Upon this, a Council was immediately call'd, and finding themselves under a pressing Necessity of stopping these Soldiers Mouths, they resolv'd to try the Power of Money for that purpose; the*



reason of which, in all probability, was because those Men were *Romans*: For otherwise, 'tis no Breach of Charity to suppose, that that Assembly could have made bold with the Law of *Moses*, in a Case of Extremity, and found other ways to dispose of Men, that were like to tell dangerous Truth, if they could have ventur'd the Civil Consequences of so doing.

However, they propos'd the Reward to them, and told them what they were to do for it: *Say ye, his Disciples came by Night, and stole him away, while we slept.* Very odd Directions to be given, by a Council of Doctors, and Heads of the People! Sure they must be under some terrible Consternation, and their Wits perfectly confus'd, to put a parcel of Men upon giving the World a formal Account, of what was done, while they were fast asleep! But if this Advice of theirs was wise, that which follow'd next was every whit as honest and pious: *And if this come to the Governour's Ears, we will persuade him, and secure you:* That is, do you tell the Lye roundly, and we will justify you in it, and back what you say; so that the Governour, if he should enquire, shall be effectually cheated and abus'd, and you come to no manner of Damage. And this (as the Historian tells us) did the Business. The Men thus tempted, and thus secur'd from Danger, yielded not only to conceal the Truth, but also to set about a contrary Story: *They took the Money, and did as they were taught.* Nor was it any wonder, that People of their Profession should be charm'd with a large Bribe, especially being wheedled by an Assembly of grave and learned Men; who would say a thousand things to them (and it being in their own Defence, to be sure they did) to work off the Apprehensions they



they had conceiv'd, upon the surprizing things they saw at the Sepulcher.

This is the Account of the Matter : And therefore the next thing to be enquir'd into, is, *What Defence the Jews made, against this heavy Charge.*

Any indifferent Person, that should hear the Case, would conclude no less, than that the whole Nation (a People that prided themselves in Character, so much as they did) should have been in a Tumult upon it : At least, that the Chief Priests and Fathers of *Israel*, should have exerted themselves after some very extraordinary manner, to clear themselves of this Aspersions ; being the Persons who suffer'd most deeply by it.

And certainly, there were very valuable Reasons for their so doing. For, besides that their Cause and Religion lay at stake, and this Account of their Proceedings was sure to be publish'd thro' the World, and transmitted even to the latest Posterity ; the Party which made this Assault upon them, was too considerable to be despis'd, and not counted worthy of an Answer ; tho' at the same time, neither their *Principles*, nor their *Circumstances* in the World, were such, as could strike their Adversaries with any dread or fear of them ; so that they should forbear doing themselves Justice upon that score.

One would expect therefore to have heard, that the *Christians* were solemnly call'd to an Account, for this provoking piece of History : That they were challeng'd to make it good, with all that Zeal and Concern, which injur'd Innocence, in a People of such Resentments as the *Jews* were, would naturally have inspir'd : That Persons and Records were appeal'd to and examin'd,

examin'd, and the matter press'd so close, that the *Christians* should have been oblig'd to make out to the World, what Grounds they had for affirming such a thing. Such stirring, and such endeavours as these, would have been but what the Case well deserv'd, to have had bestow'd upon it. But instead of this, alas! what do we find? The *Jews* contented themselves with private tattle, and thought it enough to set that Story about, which the Council had before extorted from the Soldiers. This Saying (says the Historian) *is commonly reported amongst the Jews until this Day*. It went about from one to another amongst themselves; but they never offer'd to make the least step, towards bringing the Cause in question, upon the publick Stage. And what signifies tatling to the Conviction of Mankind, where examining and proving are the things requir'd? To what purpose is spreading a Report, and teaching People privately what they should believe; when a Cause lies at stake, and must sink for ever, without some very extraordinary Defence? Men don't use to take up with such Methods as these, when they have evident Truth of their side; nor they don't use to suffer such Attacks, in Matters of such Consequence, without making another sort of Opposition, than ever the *Jews* thought fit to do in this Affair.

And therefore, we conclude, *That they were conscious to themselves, of the Truth of the Charge, and knew that they had brib'd the Soldiers to make that Report.*

And consequently, *That they were fully satisfy'd, that Jesus Christ was indeed risen; otherwise they had not offer'd Bribes to conceal it.*

Nor indeed can any Man (that does but allow himself to think, what Motives and Principles Man-

Mankind are govern'd by, and how things are always manag'd in Cases of the like nature) ever bring himself to believe, but *that the Jews would in some signal manner have vindicated themselves in a Point of this Importance, upon which the whole stress of the Controversy lay; if they had not procur'd that egregious piece of Forgery, and known it very easy to be prov'd upon them.*

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## S E C T. XLVII.

**B**UT then there is another thing, which plainly shews likewise, that they were Self-condemn'd; and that is, the *way in which they always manag'd the Controversy with the Christians.*

And he that shall but take the Pains, to compare their way of opposing *Christianity*, with the Apostles Method of propagating it; will surely see the Signs of a very bad Cause in all their Proceedings, if he has any Eyes at all.

The *Apostles* deliver'd their Message in very plain and simple Terms; they told the World what Authority they had to deliver that Message, and put every body upon searching and enquiring into the Grounds and Reasons of what they said. The *Jews* (who had the Writings of *Moses* and the *Prophets* in their hands, which they firmly believ'd to be all of Divine Inspiration) they exhorted, to a careful and serious perusal of those Writings; that they might assure themselves, whether those things which they testify'd of *Jesus Christ*, were agreeable to the Scope and Tenour of them or no. As for the rest of the World, who pretended to no *written or positive Revelation*, of God's Mind and Will;

Will; they put them upon using their *Reason* and their *Senses*, as Men ought to do, in order to their being convinc'd of the Truth of any Doctrine. And for that end, *they inform'd them of all Circumstances* that were any way necessary for their Conviction, in this particular Case; giving such exact and punctual Accounts of things, as could not be imagin'd to be given by any, but Men who were sure they had Truth on their side. And all this they did, in so *candid, meek, and good-natur'd* a way, with so much Tenderness and Forbearance towards their Enemies, temper'd with a just Zeal and Concern for the Cause which they maintain'd; that their Management, *tho without the least shews of Art and Affectation*, could not but be very agreeable to all Persons, who propos'd to themselves, to consider things, with sober and unprejudic'd Judgment.

The *Jews* took a Course, which was just the Reverse of this. They run out into Heat and Passion, and instead of Argument, threw dirt at the Apostles. For all the good and mild Treatment which they had from them, they could never find in their hearts to make any other return, than Slander and Reproach. They stigmatiz'd them with the infamous Names of *pestilent Fellows, Ringleaders of Sedition, Men that turn'd the World up-side-down, and were Enemies to Cæsar and his Government*. And these Notions they buzz'd into the Ears of the Magistrates, and great Men; nay, and into the Ears of the common People too, in all Places where the Apostles came to preach the Gospel. So that sometimes whole Cities were up in Arms against them, and Mobbs (consisting of the *leudest and most profligate* Wretches, that could be got together) were



were rais'd upon them, and inflam'd to the highest Degree; even to the assaulting the Houses where the Apostles had taken shelter, and lying in wait for them, in order to execute the Revenge of those, who had set them a-work. And as the *Jews* labour'd hard, to get their very Lives (which they would have been glad to have purchas'd at any rate whatsoever) so they many times did prevail so far, as to get them thrust into *Stocks and Prisons*, and sent out of Towns with Disgrace; with many other such little effects of Spleen and Malice, as they had Power to bring about.

Now what was all this a sign of, but, *That they were conscious to themselves, that the Apostles were not to be born down in their Testimony, by any other Methods, than those of Fury and Violence?* For do such Proceedings as these, so void of all common Justice and Humanity, look with any face of Truth or Innocence? Was that the right way to confute the *Christian Religion*, to arm the Rabble against it; to provide Whips and Shackles for the Preachers of it, and represent them as Traitors and Enemies to the State? To set up a loud Cry, *These Men are Rebels against Cæsar, and the Roman Government is in Danger by them*; and then lash and persecute them upon that imaginary Hypothesis? Who would ever think, that this should be a proper Course, to stop the Progress of a Doctrine, that came with such good Testimonials into the World? That Railing and Scolding, that Outrage and Tumult, should ever persuade any thoughtful Man, that the *Jews* were in the Right, and the Apostles in the Wrong, in what they maintain'd? Certainly, as Persecution can never convince any By-stander, of the Merits a Cause, except it be an



an absolute Bigot (that is one, who having *quitted all Pretensions to see and understand for himself, has left it to other People to do both for him*) so neither can it ever serve instead of Reason, to those Persons themselves, who suffer under it. For *Flesh and Mind* are two very different things; and tho Blows will make Impressions on the former, yet no Man can be beaten into a new *Scheme of Thoughts*.

The Understanding is not temper'd to be wrought on by Arguments of *Wood and Steel*; nor will *Fire* melt down an Opinion, which challenges a Trial by fair and rational Methods. And therefore, those who go that way to work, don't so much as pretend to treat Mankind as reasonable Creatures; but deal with them as *mere Machines*, that are to be govern'd only by rude Force and Impulse.

And what Credit this is to a Cause, all the World will easily judg. 'Tis so irrational and absurd, in the nature of the thing, and so contrary to all the usual procedures of Mankind, that have Truth and right Reason of their side; that unless a Man be strangely bias'd, he cannot forbear suspecting Falshood and Imposture, where he sees such Courses taken. And for this Reason, we say, that the *Jews*, who carry'd matters to such an extravagant height, sometimes by open, and sometimes by clandestine Management, and under all the Opportunities and Provocations they had to the contrary, would never bring the great Point in Dispute to any other Issue; *gave evident Proofs of a bad Cause*, and shew'd there was some grand Truth spoken by the Apostles, which they were afraid the World should believe.

## S E C T. XLVIII.

Fourthly, **T**HE *Christians* argue farther, *That it must needs be, that Jesus Christ was miraculously rais'd from the Dead; since it is so very plain and evident, from all the allow'd Circumstances of the Case, that there could be no fraud or trick, in conveying his Body away.*

We shall do well to bestow some Time, in a critical and rigorous Examination of this Argument; and the rather, because the *Deists* content themselves with making use of the same slender Artifice, which the *Jews* contriv'd to their hands, so many Ages ago; I mean *chatting and talking*, that the Body of *Jesus Christ* was stolen away by his Disciples. This is the general Cry of all these People; and 'tis the first Word that is put into the Mouth of a *young Deist*, by those that have the Charge of his Education. *Christ Jesus never rose again — 'Tis all a Cheat — The Disciples carry'd off his Body, and then publish'd to the World, that he was risen again — And all this in order to the carrying on their own secular Designs.* At this rate, are they taught to open against *Christianity*, at their first setting out, into the *World of Reason and Free-Thinking*. Now, tho I propose to argue upon the matter, by and by; yet at present I'll make a stand, with this Question to these Gentlemen, *viz. How they come to know, or by what means they will prove, that any Fraud of this nature was really transacted, with respect to the Body of Jesus Christ?*

They affirm it, and it is but fair for other People to demand the Proof of it. They'll not  
take

take any thing *gratis dictum* from the *Christians*. Why should the *Christians* take any thing from them, upon those Terms? If one side must have Reason, why should not the other? Besides, the Character of *rational and free-thinking Men*, which they so liberally assume to themselves, obliges them to shew some Grounds for what they assert: And they can't come off without doing it, as other People may, whose Minds are ill turn'd by Education, or cramp'd with Bigotry and Superstition.

We ask therefore, *How they make out the Point, which they assert with so much Confidence?* Have They, or the *Jews* (for *Jews* and *Deists* are all one in this Cause, whatever other Differences there are between them) any authentick Records, any Proofs from allow'd and genuine Antiquity; to shew the Truth of what they say? Or can they demonstrate it, in the strictest Sense of that Word; without having recourse to any thing of *Moral Evidence*? I am apt to believe, that Testimony will do them the most Service upon this Occasion; tho' we shall be contented with *Moral, Metaphysical, Mathematical*, or any Proof; provided we have any at all that's fit to be heard. I declare, that I never heard of any thing offer'd by them for this purpose, *that could, with the most liberal and indulgent Concessions, possible to be made within the Limits of rank Absurdity, ever pretend to pass for a Proof.* And that we may not mistake one another, nor blunder the Cause, upon the *Notion of Absurdity*; I declare likewise, that by *Absurdity*, I mean nothing else, but what the general Sense of Mankind votes to be so, and what the *Deists themselves* *statedly call and allow to be so, in all Cases, except where Religion is concerned.* By this Rule, let it be

be try'd, whether they have any thing to offer, fit to persuade a reasonable Creature, *of the Reality of that Fraud*, which they assert (and breed up their *Pupils* in the Belief of) with as much assurance, as if they had stood by and actually seen it committed. But if it be found, that they have no sufficient Grounds to bear them out, in this matter, the Question is, *On which side does the Knavery lie?* Is not this tricking and imposing upon Mankind, to tell a precarious Story, in as solemn and magisterial a way, as if it were a demonstrable Truth? To talk upon a Subject as dogmatically, as if they could make it out by *Lines and Figures*; and after all, have nothing to alledg (when the matter comes to be fairly inquir'd into) but some poor *Hypothesis*, or some random Guesses and Conjectures of their own, which a sensible Man could not hear without Indignation: This, I think, must be call'd deluding Mankind. Yet by such Arts as these, has the Cause of *Deism* been all along carry'd on in the World: Or if it has not, and the Patrons of it are sure I slander it in saying so, they'll do well to bring their best Evidences in Vindication of it.

In the mean time, I shall propose, what is urg'd by the *Christians*, upon this Head, which we have under Consideration at present.

## S E C T. XLIX.

**T**O shew therefore, *That there was not, nor could not be any kind of Fraud or underhand Management in this Affair; but that this is all the mere arbitrary and ridiculous Clamour of a Party of*  
X
Men,



*Men, whose Case is such, that they are bound not to consult either Truth or Probability, in what they assert in their own Defence: I say, in order to the evincing of this, there are several things to be consider'd; which relate, First, To the Jews: Secondly, To the Disciples of Jesus Christ themselves.*

First of all, with respect to the *Jews*.

'Tis plain, that they cut themselves off from all manner of Pretensions, to object against the *Truth of Christ's Resurrection*; by the exact Care they took beforehand, to prevent any Fraud or Cheat.

For the Great Men of the Nation, that had been concern'd in the Death of our Saviour, went in a Body to the *Roman Governour*; and told him, that *Jesus Christ* having signify'd in his Life-time, that he should *rise again*, it would be necessary to make all things as secure as possibly could be, by sealing up the Tomb, and placing a strong Guard about it. This the fore-mention'd Historian, *St. Matthew*, records particularly: — *The next Day* (says he) *that follow'd the Day of the Preparation, the Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate. And the Speech they made to him, was very remarkable, for the mighty Concern, it shew'd they were under, about this Matter. — Sir, we remember, that that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three Days I will rise again. — Command therefore, that the Sepulcher be made sure until the third Day, lest his Disciples come by Night, and steal him away, and say unto the People, he is risen from the Dead; so the last Error shall be worse than the first.*

We find they own here, in as plain and express Terms as can be, not only that our Saviour had given them warning of his *Resurrection*, and  
confe-



consequently prepar'd them for it long before-hand; but also that they were perfectly well aware, from *what Quarter* the Fraud was to be expected, and *what dismal Consequences* would follow upon it, if thro want of due Care, the Disciples should have an Opportunity of bringing it about. Well: the Favour they came to ask of the Governour, is readily granted them; they are left intirely to their own Liberty, to do whatever they think necessary, by way of Precaution, against any Cheat of this nature. Pilate *said unto them, ye have a Watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the Sepulcher sure, sealing the Stone, and setting a Watch.*

I believe it was never pretended by any body, that the *Jews* were slander'd by the Writer of this History; and that this Account of their Proceedings, was false in Fact. As for their own parts, *they never offer'd to appeal to the World, of any Abuse in this matter*; any more than in that other Case of *bribing the Soldiers*: And there is no question to be made, but the Reason of their silence, was in both Cases the same. If then it be true in Fact, that they did do thus, *that they made the Sepulcher sure, sealing the Stone, and setting a Watch*: The Question is, What have they to complain of? What have they to object, or raise a Difficulty upon? Was not every thing of their own doing, and therefore done to their compleat Satisfaction? Did the Governour snub them, or oppose their Design? Did they want Power to command a Watch? Did they want Money to hearten them, to the most exact and punctual Discharge of their Duty? Did they want Malice to *Jesus Christ*, that a Man should imagine them to be remiss and cool, in such an

Affair upon that score? How strict and severe a Charge, would they certainly give those Men, whom they appointed to the important Work, of guarding the Sepulcher? No Man can doubt, but the utmost Power of Words, in *Promises, Threatnings, and the most solemn Adjurations possible*, was employ'd and made use of on that occasion; both to strike them with a deep Sense of the weight of the Business committed to them, and to engage them to be diligent.

So that the Matter rests here.

The *Jews* had *Power and Authority*, they had *Malice and Desire*, they had all the *Reasons and Obligations*, that could possibly be incumbent on Men; to prevent this Trick, of stealing away the Body of *Jesus Christ*. And therefore, I say, *Either they took such Care to prevent it, that it should be impossible, for any Human Art or Industry, to accomplish such a Piece of Fraud, or they did not.*

If they did not, I ask, Why they did not? What hinder'd them? What Reason is to be given, for their Neglect to do so; when *Opportunity, Interest and Inclination*, all conspir'd to engage them to it?

If they did, (and sure it was very possible for them to do it) then why should not their Mouths have been for ever stop'd? With what Face could they pretend, to dispute a thing; which the utmost Power and Wit of Man, had laid the most effectual Bar against; that could be; and therefore, could not be brought about, but by the miraculous Power of Almighty God? Certainly, they ought to have acknowledg'd an Interposition of Divine Providence in the Case. For Men may be sure (if they will) of Effects, that are altogether within their own Reach  
and

and Command: and when they know, they have done all that Men can do, and find just the contrary to what they resolve upon, and must have come to pass according to the ordinary Course of things; 'tis a daring piece of Insolence, not to acknowledg the Agency of a superior Cause.

However, there is nothing more evident, than that they have left themselves no room, nor shadow of Pretence, to object against the *Truth of Christ's Righteousness*. And therefore, this shews the horrid Aggravation of their Sin; when in spite of all this Conviction of their own Consciences, attesting what they had done themselves, and what so many Tongues proclaim'd about them, the Veracity of which they could not call in question; they should yet offer, to debauch a parcel of Men, into a Consent, to spread about such a Report as this, *that the Body of Jesus was stolen away, by his Disciples, while they slept*.

But the *Christians* have so much Charity for them, as to hope, that the Blood of that *Jesus*, on whom they have endeavour'd to fix this Reproach, will avail, to the making an Atonement, even for this Sin also.

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## S E C T. L.

**A**ND thus we see, that by all the Laws of *common Justice, Truth, and right Reason*, the *Jews* are excluded, from all concern in the present Argument.

That is, they have no Right nor Claim to be heard in the Case. No Exception ever made by them, or any of their Forefathers, since the Time of *Christ's* Death; ought to be allow'd

the Privilege of common Attention or Consideration : and that for the Reasons I have alledg'd. Nor indeed was it ever known or heard, *That where Men had an absolute uncontroulable Power, of making whatsoever Provisions they should think fit, against a Case, as the Jews had; they should ever be indulg'd a Liberty of arguing and pleading in that Case afterwards, or suffer'd to pass this, for an Excuse, upon Mankind, that they had not done what they should have done, in order to the making all things sure on their own side.*

What has been said, affects our modern Unbelievers no less than the others. For if the *Jews* must be utterly silent in this Cause, to what purpose should they undertake the Argument? Do they think, they could have taken more sure and effectual Courses, in order to the Discovery of the Imposture, than what the *Jews* actually did? Certainly, unless they can give some very substantial Reasons to persuade the World, that if they had been the Managers of that Affair, they would have us'd better Methods for the preventing this Fraud, than those most inveterate Enemies of *Christ Jesus* ever thought of, or could put in practice; 'tis evident, that they cannot object any thing of that kind, with a better *Face of Modesty and good Sense*, than the *Jews* themselves.

## S E C T. LI.

**B**UT we shall consider now, Secondly, *Some Circumstances relating to the Disciples of Jesus Christ* : and see what Reasons arise from thence, to convince every Man, who is dispos'd to think calmly



calmly and impartially of the Matter; that they were not, nor could not be concern'd, in so vile and horrible a piece of Fraud as this.

And, First, we say, *They could not have accomplish'd it, if they had been so wicked as to design and contrive it.* And the reason is, Because *there were such Precautions taken against their doing so, as render'd it impossible*: Impossible, either to open Force and Violence, or to any clandestine Arts and Treachery. The *Jews* would no more have left things at such an uncertain rate, that any thing the Disciples were able to do, should have depriv'd them of the Body of *Jesus Christ*; than they would have set their Hands to the Subversion of their own Religion and Laws, and the establishing of *Christianity* in its stead. For they had reason enough to believe, that this would be the Effect of it, if a firm persuasion of *Christ's* being risen from the Dead, should once come to obtain generally in the World. Because this would make all Men see, that a Religion introduc'd by so strange and surprizing an Event, must needs be of God: And therefore, that whatever Manifestations of himself, he might before-times have made, either to the *Jews*, or any other People upon Earth, signifying in what manner he would be worship'd by them for a Season; yet this new and solemn Discovery of his Mind and Will, would undoubtedly ingage the devout Attention of Mankind to it, and determine them to worship and serve him in that way, which he had therein reveal'd. And this the Chief Priests were sensible of, when they told *Pilate*, *That the latter Error would be worse than the first.* And for that very Reason, I say, they would not fail to make it impossible for the Disciples of *Christ*, or any employ'd by them,



to put any such Trick as this upon their Nation and Religion.

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## S E C T. LII.

**T**HE Story of carrying off the Body of Jesus Christ, while the Watch was asleep, is so very gross, that it will scarce bear a telling: And those that do it in good earnest, and hope at the same time to be believ'd; must either have a very little Opinion of the Sense of those they talk to, or a very great one, of their own Credit with Mankind.

Let us consider the Matter a little: The Disciples did this, while the Men were asleep!

And how then did the Trick come to be known? Did the Disciples tell it themselves? Or were the Guard conscious of what pass'd in their *Sleep*? 'Tis not common for Men to be so. Most People need to be inform'd by others, who are *awake*, what is done by this or that Person, at a time when their own Senses cannot give them an account of it. But these Men affirm positively what is done, and by whom; when at the same time, by their own Confession, they were in their Midnight Dreams. This is very odd! Nor could they ever have known it, if they had not first consulted the Chief Priests and Pharisees. And 'tis a marvel, that the Wit of a whole *Sanhedrim* could not invent something for Men to say, that should at least have resembl'd Truth, a little more than this Account does. In short, whether one supposes the Watch to have been asleep or awake, while this thing was done, a Man sees nothing but a wide Field of Nonsense, and ridiculous

diculous Consequences before him: such, that I'll venture to say, that he that is not lost in it, must have been well us'd to such sort of way before. I am weary with arguing upon such Trifles. The Subject is grave and serious; and the ludicrous Impertinences of this Objection, apt to force a Man into an Air of talking, that may not be so sutable to the Seriousness of it; or at least incline him to insist on some vulgar things, which tho very true, and very good circumstantial Evidences, may yet make it look little and despicable to its Enemies. 'Tis sufficient, that the Story is such, as presently discovers it self, and shews a Man at first View, a bare face of Absurdity, without putting him to the trouble of a long Chain of Argument to find it out.

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## S E C T. LIII.

**B**UT Secondly, *Had the Disciples been concern'd in so vile a piece of Imposture, with what Spirit or Courage, could they ever have enter'd upon so solemn and publick Ministry, as they afterwards did enter upon?*

How could they ever preach Remission of Sins, and Everlasting Life, in the Name of a Person; who instead of rising again, and enduing them with Grace and Power for so arduous an Undertaking, had left his Body to be convey'd away by base and mean Arts of their Contrivance? They must know perfectly well, that as he could not deliver himself from Death at first (for if he was an Impostor, to be sure he would have done it if he could) nor yet conquer it afterwards  
by

by a *Resurrection*; so he was not a proper Person for them to expect any *Assistance* from. If he could not save himself, how should he be a Saviour to them and others? How should he ever protect them from the Power and Malice of the World, and carry them safe thro all Enemies and Dangers, to a blisful State in the next Life, who had left them so miserable and destitute here? Much less could they ever hope for any Countenance from Heaven; or to have the *Assistance of the Divine Spirit* to work Signs and Wonders, while they were propagating a notorious Cheat. They might have justly fear'd, to be overtaken by the *Divine Vengeance*, every step they took in such a Business; but (with the utmost Presumption Mankind can be guilty of) they could never expect *Divine Supports* and Consolations. From the World they had nothing but Shame and Contempt, Persecution and Distress, and all these in the highest degree, to expect. For as they preach'd a most amazing and ungrateful Doctrine, and came all unpolish'd to the Work, having nothing to fix the Attention, or attract the Esteem of Mankind; so they could neither hope to make Converts, nor meet with any good Quarter where they went. And therefore, they were of all Men in the World, the most forlorn and miserable. They had neither Heaven nor Earth on their side; but both engag'd against them. All the ill Usage that could be in this World, and severe Punishments in the next, for their horrible Profanation of the sacred Name of God, in declaring he sent them to publish this Imposture; was all that they could have a Prospect of. And therefore, being destitute of all Motives, that could possibly encourage them to such an Undertaking, as preaching the Gospel;

Gospel; I say, they would never have gone about it, but the whole Design had drop'd, and the World never heard of the *Christian Faith*. But they did do it, and that with indefatigable Zeal and Industry; with a Spirit, *far transcending all that ever was known in Human Nature before*: Such as knew no Baulk nor Despondency, no Weariness nor Remission; but held it out thorough all Storms, and was even wrought up to greater Heights, by Persecution it self. And a Man may with as much Reputation to his Sense and Understanding, affirm the grossest and most palpable Contradictions in Nature; as that Men who were conscious to themselves of so vile a Cheat, should ever manage things after this manner \*.

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## S E C T. LIV.

Thirdly, **A**S they could not, nor would not have any personal immediate Concern, in so abominable an Enterprize; so neither would they engage, or would any other Persons be engag'd by them therein.

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\* *This wonderful Spirit of Courage and Resolution, appear'd in the Sufferings of the Christians, after the Apostles Time: of which there are many surprizing Instances on Record.*

Ἐπαρμόμεν τὰς ἐσχάτας πινυίας, καὶ θανάτῳ χαίρομεν.  
Just. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph.

And Eusebius tells us they did — μετὰ χαρῆς καὶ γέλωτος καὶ εὐφροσύνης τὴν νεκρῶν σποράν τῷ θανάτῳ καταδέχεσθαι.  
Hist. Eccles. Lib. 8. c. 9.

—That they were wont, 'Εἰς αὐτῶν τὴν τελευταίαν ἀναπνοῇ, τὸ ἄλυσιν καὶ ἀπάρεχον καὶ ἀπέναντι διαίτησιν ἡρετεῖαν, ὥστε ψάλλειν καὶ ὕμνος καὶ εὐχαριστίας εἰς τὸ τὸ ὅλων Θεὸν ἀναπέμπειν. Id. Loc. citat.



Let us put the Case for Argument sake, and see what common Sense will allow a Man to suppose to be done, by Persons in their Circumstances, with respect to this matter. For we must not make ridiculous and extravagant suppositions, and fancy the Apostles to do what Men in their right Wits never did, or would do in the like Case; and then go and argue to the Disadvantage of the *Christian Cause*, from those unjust and chimerical suppositions of our own making.

Now the true State of the Case is thus :

*Here was a small number of Men, who having closely adher'd to Jesus Christ (whom the Jews had crucify'd) and professing to live after his Laws; had render'd themselves obnoxious to the same Ill-will and Resentments, which had appear'd so remarkably against their Master.*

They were poor, and could give no Bribes.

They could make no tempting Promises to allure Men into their Interest, having nothing but Ruin and Misery before them.

But besides, common Prudence it self would never have suffer'd them to trust any body with this important Secret. For whoever they should have made so infamous a Proposal to, as that of *stealing away the Body of Jesus Christ*; would either out of pure detestation of so gross a Villany; or to curry Favour with the Jews, by so signal a piece of Service done to their Cause; or lastly, out of hope of some very great Reward, for the Discovery of a Plot of such Consequence as this: for one, or other of these Reasons, I say, would infallibly have divulg'd the matter. If they were Persons of Probity, their Abhorrence of so foul a Crime, would have made them do it: If not, the Prospect of certain Gain and Advantage, would



would have charm'd them to the Discovery. From the Apostles they could expect nothing; from the *Jews* they might expect every thing, that could be a Temptation to Mankind. They had no imaginable Motives, to persuade them to keep the Apostles Counsel; but they had Reputation, Applause and Rewards from the *Jews*; nay, and a Reward to expect from God too (if they had an Eye to his Glory, and the general Good of Mankind) in the laying open of so vile an Imposture.

How is it credible then, that Men in such Circumstances as the Disciples were, should (if they had attempted it) ever have succeeded in their Attempt, *of engaging a Company of Men in so desperate a Design, as that of stealing the Body of Jesus Christ?* And how is it credible, that any others but Men, who were desperate and mad even to Extremity; should ever engage themselves in it, under all the Precautions taken by the *Jews*, to frustrate their Attempts; and the many Arguments arising both from *Sense and Reason*, to dissuade them from it? And supposing a Set of such Wretches could have been got ready, and ty'd fast to the Undertaking; yet how is it credible, that they should be able to break thorow all the Obstacles, which the *Power and Policy of the Jewish Nation* had laid in their way? In a word, what is there in this whole *Hypothesis*, that is credible; according to the common Rules and Measures of Credibility amongst Men?

Let us bring the Case down to plain *Fact and Experience* in the World; and see where any Attempt of this kind, by such Persons, and in such Circumstances, was ever accomplish'd and brought to Perfection. Nay, let us but find out, where  
there

there are a Set of Men, whose Heads are turn'd after such a manner; that they can heartily believe, that such an Exploit as this, was ever to be perform'd by Men in the Condition of *Christ's* Disciples; in opposition to all the Efforts of a forewarn'd, malicious, potent, watchful Nation of Adversaries, whose Interest, Temper, Policy, and Religion, all oblig'd them to prevent it.

But I shall close this Argument, with one Question to the unbelieving People; which being a Question of Fact, and of modern Fact too, pretty notorious and very pertinent to our purpose; it will deserve the more Consideration.

They know very well, that in a certain Country, not many Years ago, there were a Set of Men, who pretended to the Gift of *Prophecy*, and *Divine Inspiration*; and accordingly gave out many Speeches and Warnings, which they declar'd were from God.

They remember also, that one of this Number *dying*, it was given out by the rest of the *Set*, that he would *rise again*. And this was done with such an Air of Confidence and Assurance, that no little Commotion was rais'd in a great City by that means.

I need not say what the *Event* was, after prudent Care was taken, to prevent foul play; and matters were order'd so, that if the defunct Person did quit his Grave, at the appointed Time, it should appear to all the World, to be a true and real *Resurrection*, and that the Voice of the *Omnipotent* had indeed call'd him from thence. But after all, suppose it had been pretended by the People of this *Set*, that their *Fellow-Prophet* did in truth rise from the Dead, on the Day that was set: That the Power of Almighty God had exerted

exerted it self on their behalf, and given full Testimonials of the Truth of their Mission, by restoring that Person to Life again, whom so many Eyes had seen truly and really dead but a little before. And put the Case, *That this Story had been propagated with such Success, that there were Reasons to fear, lest a good part of the Country should by Degrees be proselyted over to the Belief of it, and so great Changes and Confusions in the Publick arise there-from :*

I would ask these Gentlemen, *What Course they themselves, being upon the Spot, would have taken, in order to their being compleatly satisfy'd of the Right of this Matter ? And whether they don't believe they could have come to a final positive Conclusion about it, one way or other ; after such Search and Application for that End, as the World would expect from Men, who set up for the nicest Judges of Truth and right Reason ?*

I believe they'll take the wisest and most prudent part of the Answer (which is the *affirmative*) and allow, that it was very possible and practicable for them, to come to such a determinate Resolution, about the Truth of this Case.

Very well then : And why should not People seventeen hundred Years ago, have been as curious and inquisitive, and as well able to satisfy themselves fully about the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ* ; as our *Deists* at this time of Day, about the *Resurrection* of this pretended Prophet ? They cannot pretend to have either the *Power, or the Opportunity, or the Reasons for enquiring*, which the *Jews* had : And to think that they have better Eyes to see thro an *Imposture*, than the rest of the World, is unsufferable Vanity and Arrogance.

Had

Had our modern Prophet been convey'd out of his Grave, by any slight or trick of his Companions; how warm and eager would these Gentlemen have been, in the pursuit of them, when they had once scented the matter! They would not have been diverted by frivolous Stories and Pretences; they would not have been satisfy'd with groundless and precarious Reports. But having begun the Chace, they would have held it on, till they had run the Impostors down, and laid the Plot open to the World. They would never have contented themselves with common Story and Fame, *his Companions came by Night, and stole him away*; but they would have satisfy'd Mankind, that they did so; as the *Jews* would have done in the like Case, if there had been the same Reason for it.

And 'tis a wonder to me, these Gentlemen should not be so civil to the *Jews*, as to believe, that they were both able and willing, to do as much towards the discovery of an Imposture in that Case; as themselves could and would have done, in that we are now speaking of.

I hope they'll allow one of the Persons to be much more famous and remarkable than the other; and the Consequence of his *Resurrection* to be of proportionably greater Moment. So that I can give my self no manner of account, why they should not conclude, *That there was all the Care taken, both to prevent and find out the Cheat, which they themselves would have taken, had they been upon the Spot; or would have done in this Case of the modern Prophet, before they would have been impos'd upon by a new Resurrection.* If they fancy they have more Wit and Sagacity than the *Jews*: I say, tho this be very vain and idle; yet I hope they will not set up to rival them, in  
point



point of Spleen and Malice. And they know very well, that Hatred and Revenge will sharpen People's Wits, and make up, in many Cases, for the Defects of Understanding. However, the *Jews* were not that stupid People, that some of these Gentlemen have represented them to be.

After what has been said upon this *fourth* Head of Argument, I would hope these Gentlemen may, upon cool Thoughts, find it reasonable to make less Noise about *Frauds* and *Impositions*, and other strange things, commonly talk'd of amongst them: which having never made any attempt at proving, or shewing how it was so much as probable they should be brought about; we must conclude the Design of it, is either to amuse People with some shew of Objections against *Christianity*; or else purely to make an Experiment, how far the Credit of their Word will go amongst Mankind instead of Demonstration.

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## S E C T. LV.

Fifthly, **A**ND Lastly, *The horrid and intolerable Absurdities, consequent upon the Supposition, that Christ Jesus did not rise from the Dead; shall close the Proof offer'd on the side of the Christians, to evince the Truth of it.*

I have shewn already at PROP. VI. Part II. that Absurdities of the *Moral* Kind, are in the nature of things, worse and more wretched than any that relate to matters of *Science*; and therefore, that it is not only fair and just, to pronounce that Proposition false, from whence such manifest Impossibilities are legitimately infer'd;

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but



but also, that the Case is much worse, for a Man to be reduc'd and driven to a Necessity of standing by them, than to be forc'd to the like Extremity, in the course of any other sort of Argument whatsoever.

Let us see therefore, what a Man must be oblig'd to believe, who makes this Doctrine of *Christ's Resurrection*, to be all Cheat and De-lusion.

He must believe——

That a despicable Company of wilful *Impostors* and Deceivers, Men of a hated Nation and Religion, without Learning and Discipline, without Skill and Experience, without any of the Arts of pleasing and recommending themselves to Mankind, should run down all the Wit, and Power, and Policy of the World; and preaching a most despised, incredible, and seemingly ridiculous Doctrine, directly contrary to all the worldly Interests and Humours of Men, to their Religion and Customs, and to their Reason and Philosophy too; should propagate the Belief of it \* *far and wide thro the Earth*, so that there was scarce a Nation in the whole Compass of

\* Οὐδὲ ἐν γὰρ ὅλῳ ἐστὶ τὸ γένος ἀνθρώπων, εἴτε βαρβάρων, εἴτε ἐλλήνων, εἴτε ἀπλῶς ὠπνιῶν ἐνόματι περσαγορευδόντων, ἐν οἷς μὴ διὰ τὰ ὀνόματι τὰ εὐρωθέντι Ἰησοῦ εὐχαὶ καὶ εὐχαρισταὶ τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ποιητῇ τῷ ὅλων γίνονται.  
Just. Dial. cum Tryph.

Μόνον ἀνὰ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην χειρὸς τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν πατρὶς βασιλείαι, καὶ τῇ ὅς αὐτὴ χειριανῶν περσηγορεύει, τὴν σύμπασαν ἐπλησεν οἰκουμένην. Euseb. Demonst. Evang. Lib. 5.

But 'tis endless to reckon up the Testimonies that might be brought under this Head. 'Tis remarkable, that the Enemies of Christianity themselves gave it the Name of the prevailing Doctrine. So Porphyry, who call'd it ἡ κερτασσα δόξα; which (as I remember) is taken notice of by Eusebius.

the

the Globe, but what in whole, or in part, receiv'd this Fiction as the most sacred Truth of God, and laid all the stress of their Salvation upon it accordingly.

Or if he has so much Charity for the Apostles, as not to think them crafty and designing *Impostors*; he must believe that all this was done by *Lunaticks* and *Madmen*: That Men hurry'd by the Impetus of a wild extravagant Fancy, were Masters of all that *Conduct and Management*, that *Argument and Address*, which was requisite to bring these astonishing Effects about. Or if he finds it too hard to suppose, that a Company of distracted Men should ever be able to argue with so much Art and Force, as to overpower all the Wisdom and Learning of the World; then he must think the rest of Mankind who believ'd them, to be mad as well as they: That they were convinc'd and perswaded by mere Enthusiasm, that they mistook downright Raving for the strongest Reason, and a Chain of absurd incoherent Falsities, for bright and evident Demonstrations of Truth: That all the Sages, Statesmen and Philosophers, who embrac'd *Christianity*, in great numbers, as well as the Poor and Illiterate, believ'd they had Proofs which they had not; thought things were plain and clear to them, which were not; fancy'd irresistible Strength, Majesty and Eloquence, in an empty Noise and Sound of Words, made by a Company of poor distemper'd Men, who neither knew nor car'd what they said.

Or Lastly, He must believe,

That the greatest and most remarkable Revolution that the World ever knew or heard of, was effected without either any proper and ne-

cessary *Natural* Means, or any *Supernatural* Help and Assistance.

For all the *Natural* Means that can be thought of, are reducible to the Heads of *Compulsion*, or *Persuasion*; whether by Reason and Rhetorick, or Bribes, and other Temptations of that kind. These are all, and the only ways, that Men can make use of, to accomplish any Design of this nature. And I challenge all the World to shew me in a single Instance, which of them all, was made use of by the Apostles, in the Propagation of the *Christian* Faith.

Then, as for *Supernatural* Assistances; 'tis past all Doubt, that they could have none, even in the Opinion of the *Deists* themselves.

For *God* would not, nor could not afford them any Help; and that, whether they were wilful *Impostors*, or mere undesigning crack-brain'd Enthusiasts. For the Work they were engag'd in, being a horrible Cheat upon Mankind in the matters of their Salvation, it would be Blasphemy, to suppose him to have concurr'd to the Success of it. And as for *Demons and evil Spirits*, these Gentlemen laugh at all the Stories of their Existence and Operations. Magick Arts and Enchantments, Conjuraton and Witchcraft, are things quite out of the way of their Belief. And therefore to be sure, they will not so much as suspect there were any Artifices of this kind made use of to delude Mens Understanding, and so help on this stupendous Revolution in the World. However, since these Gentlemen will not hear of Demons in other Cases; they shall not be allow'd to bring them in here, to help at a dead lift, for the Solution of a Difficulty. And if other People must be ridicul'd, as credulous superstitious Fools, for asserting upon unanswerable

ble Testimonies of Fact, Confederacies between such Beings, as evil Spirits and wicked Men in this World; we ought to take care, that they have not the Liberty of supposing any Combinations of that kind, when 'tis only to serve their own Purposes in an Argument. So that here, I say, was the most surprizing Turn that was ever given to the Affairs of the World, given by nothing at all; brought about by no body knows or can guess, or pretend to assign, and determine what it was. Neither Heaven nor Hell was concern'd in the matter. There was nothing in or of Mankind, that can be shewn to be capable of producing such an Effect, according to the ordinary Laws of Nature, and the known Experience of the World.

Neither Wit and Learning, nor Arts and Intrigues, nor Mony and Interest, nor open Force and Violence; and I dare say, these Gentlemen can tell us of no other ways besides these, by which Parties and Factions are ever made in the World.

But we will go on.

The *Deists* must believe farther——

*That twelve poor Fishermen were not only able, without any sort of Assistance, to compass that vast Design, of making the World stoop to the Laws they impos'd; but also, that they laid their Plot so deep, that the Effects of it should be permanent and lasting, and no succeeding Age or Generation, ever be able to fathom it, and shew where the Cheat lay. That a Company of rude untaught Mechanicks, out-did the profoundest Wisdom and Sagacity of Mankind; and concerted matters so artfully, that none of all the penetrating and inquisitive Genii of the World, for a Succession of so many Centuries, should after their deepest Researches and*



Examinations, find it possible to discover the least Fault or Flaw in the Contrivance.

He must believe——

That these Men had absolutely divested themselves of all the *Principles of Self-love*, Tenderness, Care, and Regard to their own Preservation or Happiness. That they despis'd all the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. That they ventur'd upon Poverty and Misery, upon Obloquy and Shame, upon Persecution and Torments, upon Death, and Damnation it self in the next World, and all for nothing; for no End or Purpose that can be imagin'd or thought of. That they bid defiance to all that Human Nature can ever dread or shun in this World, without having any Design in view; without being acted by any Motives, or having any Grounds and Reasons for what they did.

For a Design, that bears no proportion to Men's Actions, is no Design at all; just as an Agent or Cause, that is wholly incapable to produce such or such an Effect, is, with respect to that Effect, no Cause at all. And that is demonstrably the Case here. For 'tis manifest from all the Circumstances of the Matter, that these Persons could have no End in view, that bore any proportion to the Actions they did, or the Dangers they ventur'd upon. Nay, they had none but dark and dismal Prospects before them; and (instead of quickning Motives) they had the greatest Discouragements to Action, that Men could ever possibly lie under.

And therefore there is no Remedy, but we must suppose them to be a sort of Men, specifically distinct from all others in the World; to be made after such a manner, and endow'd with such Tempers and Dispositions, as no other Men  
besides



besides themselves ever were. Because (as we have shewn PROP. I. and II. Part II.) Mankind are influenc'd by such Motives, as Hope and Fear. They are led by Prospects of Interest, Gain, Honour, or Favour amongst their Fellow-Creatures; or else by Principles of Piety and Devotion; so that what they do, is the Effect either of a superstitious and mistaken, or else of a truly religious Zeal for God.

Whereas all these, are evidently excluded from the present Case; and consequently it must run up to this monstrous Conclusion at last, *viz. That God Almighty had made a Set of preposterous irregular Creatures, fit to carry on a wretched Design in the World, that requir'd something very extraordinary and particular, in the Constitutions of those that were to have the Management of it. But to go on.*

He must believe——

*That those very Persons, who but a few Hours before, had so little Spirit and Courage left them, that they forsook their Master in his greatest Extremities; and after all their Protestations of inviolable Constancy and Fidelity to him, were yet so over-power'd by terrible Apprehensions, that they durst not own themselves his Disciples, no nor scarce shew their Heads by Day-light, for fear of the Jews; that these Men, I say, should all of a sudden grow so resolute, as to venture upon that bold and hazardous Undertaking, of forcing the Sepulcher, and carrying off his Body.*

Nay, that they did not only venture, but did actually do it. And that not a Man of all the Guards, plac'd there by the Jews, was ever alarm'd or disturb'd, but slept on securely till the Design was executed; and yet after all, could

tell very punctually when they awak'd, that the Disciples had been there, and stolen the Body away.

He must believe this to be possible and true, or else, that the Guards themselves favour'd the Attempt, and only counterfeited a Sleep, to give the Impostors an Opportunity of finishing what they came about.

He must believe——

*That Men thus Rash and Desperate, busied in an Enterprize of so much Danger, and which therefore requir'd all the Expedition and Dispatch possible to be made; would spend precious Time in unaccountable Niceties and Ceremonies, and do such things as could be of no manner of Use or Service to them; but on the other hand, evidently expose them to the Danger of being surpriz'd and caught.*

That, instead of taking a dead Body away, wrap'd up and cover'd as they found it, they would first divest it of its Burial-Clothes, and then dispose them in several Parcels by themselves, some in one Place, and some in another; and not rather chuse to carry off all together, as Thieves would infallibly have done, who were in haste, and knew not but the next Minute might bring the Guards about them.

And certainly those Persons, who could have found a safe and private Repository for the Body of *Jesus Christ*, after they had so artfully gotten it out of the Tomb; could also have found a way to dispose of the *Burial-Clothes*, that they might never have been seen more, to discover the Trick: And therefore, infallibly would never have left them where they were actually found.

Lastly, Such a Man must believe——

*That a Company of the greatest Impostors that ever the World had, and who therefore, must necessarily*  
be

*be the worst Men that ever were; did notwithstanding, furnish Mankind with the most exact System of Morality that ever was; and taught such Rules of Living, as were never to be expected from all the Schools of Philosophy in the World.*

That Men, whose only Purpose and Design was to cheat and abuse the World, should yet industriously lay the surest Foundations, for the Peace and Happiness of it, that ever were or could be laid.

That the vilest and most notorious Hypocrites, would spend all their Time, and their very Lives too, in indefatigable Labours, to make other Men upright and sincere; and tho' their whole Business (upon this *Hypothesis*) was nothing else but Lying and Deceiving, would yet denounce Everlasting Damnation, and insist upon it, that no less than this should be the Punishment of all those who allow'd themselves in such Practices.

That having themselves no Notions at all of the Great and Glorious God, they should yet impart the most rational and becoming Notions of him, to the rest of Mankind; and by no other Principles but those of pure Atheism and Irreligion, kindle a Flame of Desire in the Hearts of Men, to serve and worship him.

In a word, that they took infinitely more Pains, to contradict and confute themselves, nay, to expose themselves to all the World, as the most abandon'd Sinners that ever came into it; than they needed to have done, to have establish'd the best Reputation, and gotten an immortal Fame amongst Men.

That they compil'd their System of Religion, as a standing Monument to their own Shame; and that all their Sermons and Writings, were but so many Satyrs and Lampoons upon themselves.

## S E C T. LVI.

NOW these are some (and but some) of those Extravagancies, which must pass for certain and unquestionable Truths amongst the Deists.

These are some Articles of their Belief, resulting from their grand Hypothesis, of Cheat and Imposture in the Matter of *Christ's Resurrection*.

'Tis true, that by artful and plausible Turns, a *Deist* may seem to avoid the Odium of these Consequences, and make People believe, he is chargeable with no such Absurdities, as we pretend to fasten upon him. This may easily be done, by the Power of Words, which those Gentlemen sometimes make very happy uses of this way. But after all, there is a Right and a Wrong; there is a difference between real Truth, and Sophistry well disguis'd and dress'd up in imitation of it. And the *Former* will stand, in spite of all the false and deluding Appearances of the *Latter*.

And as these Inferences are plain and naked Truth, so I make no doubt, but they will ever be so, to all Men who have no Interest to keep them from owning it.

Coroll. 1. *The Deists, by denying the Fact of Christ's Resurrection, must believe things, which are, beyond Comparison, more prodigious and incredible, than all that the Christians who own and profess the Truth of this Doctrine, are bound to believe, by virtue of such their Profession.*

For all that the *Christians* pretend to in the matter, is this, *viz.* That *Jesus Christ* having suffer'd an ignominious and painful Death upon the Cross, was on the third Day after, rais'd up again, by the Power of Almighty God; and that having spent some time here on Earth, after his Resurrection, he was then carry'd up into Heaven, by the same Divine Power, where he still resides, being crown'd with Honour and Glory.

Now I desire to know what there is that can be call'd *incredible* in this Account; what there is, that thwarts any establish'd Law or Principle of Reason, for a Man to believe it? 'Tis not an incredible thing, that God should raise the Dead. And 'tis not incredible, that he should raise and glorify such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, who had liv'd a perfectly holy and blameless Life, and died a cruel and miserable Death, by the implacable Malice of his Enemies.

'Twas not inconsistent with any of the Divine Perfections, nor is there any Reason possible to be given *à priori*, which should shew that God ought not to have done this: As I have particularly demonstrated before.

So that here is no manner of Absurdity or Inconvenience, consequent upon the Belief and Profession of this *Christian* Doctrine.

But the *Hypothesis* of the *Deists*, is loaded with infinite Absurdities and Contradictions. They must be forc'd, as we have seen already, to make such wretched Suppositions, in order to salve plain and evident Matter of Fact; as are not to be heard and endur'd by any Man, that has the least degree of common Sense; and which they themselves would hoot a Person for making, in any other Case. They are oblig'd to contradict all the Knowledge and certain Experience of the World;  
to



to fall foul upon all the *Laws of Human Nature*; and make Men to be, and to do such sort of things, as they never were nor can be, nor never did nor can do, while they continue to be Men. And all this is the natural and genuine Consequence of their avow'd *Hypothesis*, without any straining of it, or unfair Management whatsoever. And therefore I infer in the next place,

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## S E C T. LVII.

Coroll. 2. **T**HAT all their Pretensions to just and impartial Thinking (in these matters at least) are vain and idle; that their so much boasted Aversion to all kind of Bigotry and Credulity, is mere Jest and Scene; and that they are in reality either some of the most fondly credulous Persons in the World, or else (which is infinitely worse) wilfully and obstinately set, to overlook Truth which is against them.

For if to be credulous, be to believe the most prodigious things, without any shew of Reason or Proof for them: If it be Bigotry, to take the most absurd and ridiculous Stories for certain Truths, upon the bare Word and Authority of another Person, who dictates to a Man's Understanding, and settles the Articles of his Faith for him: Then are the *Deists* fairly chargeable with both these, and that in an extraordinary Degree.

The little People amongst them, who never examine and search into things themselves, but are led on by others, and make use of their Eyes instead of their own; these are Bigots, that is, Men who are grossly abus'd and impos'd upon by others,

others, to believe things that are not true, but only serve the Turn of a Party: This is the same thing, with what they call in their Language, being *Priest-ridden*; when they would intimate how the common People are govern'd, and led on in a blind Road of Belief, by the *Christian* Clergy. All the difference is, that the *Christian* (the Protestant *Christian*) Teachers, give their People the Grounds and Reasons of their Faith, and require no Man to believe them upon their Word, without substantial Evidence and Proof for what they say. But the Gentlemen, on the other side, won't trust the People under their Institution, with such things as Reasons; but think it sufficient to order and prescribe the matter of their Belief: well knowing, that *Ignorance* is as much the Mother of Irreligion in Principle, as of false Religion and Devotion in Practice.

As for the *leading and governing Men of the Party*, those who pretend to argue and reason upon the matter; if they heartily believe their own Scheme, they are credulous to a Prodigy: in that such absurd and ridiculous things as the Consequences of it, will go down with them without Offence. Nor can I guess why they should stop here, and not go on to the Fictions of a *Popish Legend*, or a *Turkish Alcoran*. 'Tis true, some of those Stories appear more ludicrous and comical, or more despicable and sordid; and so incline a Man either to contemn, or laugh at them: But I dare say, they do not involve more Inconsistencies and Impossibilities, in the Nature and Order of things; than what the *Deists*, if they act a sincere part, must believe in making the *Christian Religion* an *Imposture*.

It would perhaps give a Man more Diversion, to hear of Birds and Beasts, cringing and paying their Adorations to a *consecrated Wafer*, when brought within sight of them; but it would shock him with a deeper Sense of Impossibility, *to hear of a whole World of rational Creatures, adoring a crucify'd (reputed) Malefactor, as the Son of the Eternal God, and the Great Judge of the World; and all upon the Testimony of twelve poor Fishermen, without any concurrence of Divine Power and Providence, or any Human Arts to dispose them thereto.* Nay, no Arts of Man ('tis plain) could ever possibly have wrought Effects, any thing comparable to these! Or if these Gentlemen think otherwise, let them make the Experiment, and satisfy themselves. Let a Company of them go forth, and propose some strange and new Doctrine to the World; let them set it off with all the Advantages of Eloquence and Wit; let them argue and persuade, promise and threaten; and and try if by any or all of these ways, they can propagate their Opinion thorow all the Kingdoms of the Universe; and impress such a Sense of it on the Minds of Men, that they shall all agree to make it a fundamental Article of their Faith, and commit it to writing, and translate it into all Languages, and recommend it as an invaluable Treasure to succeeding Generations. I doubt they would find this hard Work; and I as firmly believe, that they would never venture Reputation, Pleasure, Fortune and Life it self, upon such a Design. And I think it may fairly be urg'd, as a very good Argument to *them* (if there were nothing else to be said in the Case) *that there must be something very extraordinary in the matter, when a few despis'd illiterate Men, should be able to do that in two or three Years space, which*  
more

more than so many thousands of these Gentlemen, such great Masters of Reason, Wit and Policy, as they set up for, would never be able to accomplish the hundredth Part of, were they to be allow'd as many Centuries, as the others had Months and Weeks, to do it in.

But if on the other hand, they see into all these Consequences, and know how bad and perplex'd they are, and yet resolve in seeing, not to see, and in knowing, not to know them; the Case is infinitely worse: And I shall chuse rather to let it pass without Reflections, than to make any upon it that may seem harsh and invidious.

## S E C T. LVIII.

**W**E have now seen upon what Grounds the *Christians* proceed to assure themselves, *That this Doctrine is true.* What the Result of all is, we shall see by and by.

However, before I enter upon that matter, of summing up the Evidence, and demonstrating what it will amount to, by virtue of the Principles laid down and establish'd, in Part II. of this Treatise; I think it very reasonable and expedient to consider, *What the Deists have to say to the contrary.*

For this will help much to the increase and strengthening of the Evidence; and we shall draw our Conclusion with far more Advantage, when we shall have evinc'd, *That these Gentlemen have not any thing that is fine and truly plausible to object.*

For I cannot call any Objection so, in which the Sophistry is not pretty artfully hid, and does  
not

not imitate Truth so well, as to produce a little kind of shock upon the hearing of it, and require some pains in order to the finding it out. Now I do not apprehend any thing of this nature, in any Objection of theirs, against *the Fact of our Saviour's Resurrection.*

I speak of what they have hitherto thought fit openly to declare of their Minds, as to that matter. For all the rest stands for nothing; and the strongest Objections possible, are no Objections to any Party, till they are propos'd and made known.

But we will consider them distinctly.

## S E C T. LIX.

FIRST then, as for the *Disciples stealing away the Body of Jesus Christ*, I have consider'd that very particularly already; and shewn, *That if there be any Methods and Rules establish'd amongst Mankind, for judging when a thing is extravagant and absurd, we must conclude and pronounce that Supposition to be so.* But then that which cuts off all that sort of talk at once (and which is all I shall say more upon that Head) is this, *viz. That tho they could shew ever so unexceptionably in Theory, how such an egregious Fraud as that, might have been fairly practicable; tho they could form the most regular and consistent Hypothesis, which should solve all the Phenomena, and make us sensible how all the Parts and Steps of such a Design might have gone on, without any appearance of Contradiction, or falling foul upon any Laws of Human Nature and the World: yet unless they went on to actual Truth and Matter of Fact, and shew'd that things were really*  
manag'd



*manag'd thus and thus, in this particular Case of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; unless, I say, they did this, all their Theory would be but so much Banter and Trifle. For what have we to do with Hypotheses? I hope an arbitrary fictitious Scheme is not to be impos'd upon Mankind, instead of clear and satisfactory Proof; especially in a Case of such Consequence as this is! And therefore, if they could set that Affair in ever so pretty a Light, in the way of May-be's and Peradventures; yet if they do not come to Realities and plain Fact, we have no more to say. Nor are they to be heard any otherwise than we would hear some Romantick Philosopher, who should offer us the Fictions of his own Brain, instead of Truth and Experiment, for the solving of a Difficulty in Nature.*

But to proceed; *Secondly, 'Tis evident, That the Deists cannot object against the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection; that the thing it self is absurd and contradictory, and so could not possibly have been brought about upon that account. They have no room nor scope to urge any thing of this kind.*

Nor can they argue, *That it was any way unfit and indecent, or any more unbecoming the Moral Perfections of God to permit and allow of, than it was beyond the reach of his Wisdom and Power to effect. And having demonstrated this already, in a place by it self, there will be no occasion to insist any farther on that Point neither.*

And indeed I could wish, that all the Controversy between the *Christians* and these Gentlemen, was reduc'd only to one of the Heads now mention'd; and that they would pick out, and stand by one of these three, as a Point on which they would lay the stress of the Cause, *viz. Either*

*the Impossibility or the Unfitness of the thing ; or the fraudulent Management of the Disciples.*

But I fear they won't bring Matters so near to an Issue, as this comes to.

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## S E C T. LX.

**I** Must beg pardon now, if I say, that I think there can be but one thing more behind, to be offer'd as a Difficulty. I would by no means be thought to limit the Fancy and Invention of other Men ; or to suppose, that they can say no more than I say for them. But I speak of Objections that carry something of a tolerable Face with them, and court the Understanding to a little Attention. Otherwise indeed, there's Scope enough in this, or any other Question whatsoever, to gratify an obstinate disputing Humour ; and People that are fond of talking out of the Bounds of just Argument, may find Matter to talk upon, till they have weary'd themselves, and all the World about them.

But the Business is this, and I dare say, 'tis a Point our *Deists* will not deny ; but they sometimes think of, and fancy we are not a little perplex'd how to get over it.

*Why was not the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as open and publick a thing as his Death ? Why did he not come out of the Grave in the Face of all the World, that People might have been satisfy'd by their own Eyes, that he was indeed miraculously rais'd ? Or if he had but shewn himself in publick, and convers'd with Mankind as freely and commonly as he did before ; there could have been no Dispute in the Case, and all Men would have believ'd on him.*

him. But instead of this, here are only his Disciples and some few others, who pretend to have seen and convers'd with him for some Days, and then declare, that at the end of that time, he ascended up into Heaven.

I remember, that the Jews, amongst other Insults offer'd to our Saviour in his Agonies on the Cross, propos'd an Experiment, not much unlike to this.

*Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three Days ; save thy self. — If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.*

And it was not the common People only who did this ; but the Chief Priests and Elders join'd with them in the same Mockery. *He sav'd others, himself he cannot save. — If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe him.*

These People were for a publick Experiment of our Saviour's Power and Divinity ; and offer'd to believe, provided he would but extricate himself at that Moment, in the Eyes of all the People. And the *Deists* (whose Demands run every whit as high) would be contented to believe, if the *Resurrection* had but been a publick Spectacle, or *Christ Jesus* had shewn himself in Places of common Resort, preaching and teaching the People, as he us'd to do before his Crucifixion. This it seems, would have been full Conviction to them ! For they could have taken the *Jews* Word for it, *that he really did do so* ; and notwithstanding the doubtful and precarious Nature of *Human Testimony*, would have subscrib'd to the Evidence, if it had but been thus fairly represented to them.

But let us examine this matter a little.

## S E C T. LXI.

**I**F our Saviour's not rising publickly, or not appearing in the Face of the World, after his *Resurrection*; be a just and real Ground of Exception to these Gentlemen: they must then make use of it, one or other of these ways.

First, *They must take it either as a direct and conclusive Argument; or at least as a Ground of very shrewd Suspicion, that he did not rise from the Dead at all.*

Or, Secondly, They must reason thus: *That it would have been every way better and more advantageous, with respect to the Conviction, and consequently, the general Good of Mankind; if Christ Jesus had in his own Person, given some publick and undeniable Proofs, of his being alive again, after his Death upon the Cross, which was so notorious to all the World at that time.*

One or other of these must needs be their meaning, if they have any Objection at all to make upon this score. And I make no doubt to shew, *That no Inference can be made, with any tolerable good Sense, either way.*

## S E C T. LXII.

**F**IRST of all, I think we may be pretty secure, *That they will not offer this to us, as a direct conclusive Argument.*

Because it will be extremely hard, to justify such a Consequence as this: *Christ Jesus did not shew*

shew himself in Publick; therefore he did not rise from the Dead: The Generality of the People did not see and converse with him, as was usual before his Death; therefore his Disciples, nor no others did do so.

I take it for granted they'll not reason thus.

But then I say farther, they can't urge this neither, as any Ground of rational Suspicion, *That our Saviour's Resurrection was not real, but the mere Fiction of his Disciples.* For tho we could give no account at all of the matter; yet an infinitely wise Being, who does not see things in our false Lights, nor judg of them in that fond and partial way that we do; might see it best and fittest, for Reasons known only to himself, to order the matter so, *That this wonderful Event should not be brought about in so open and pompous a manner, as in our shallow Schemes we may imagine it ought to have been.*

They'll say perhaps, *That this is all but Supposition and Surmise; and that we only tell them of what God may see fit to do, upon some occult and mysterious Reasons, which we have nothing to do to meddle with, and therefore ought not to argue upon them.*

Very well; let it pass for granted at present, *That this is but Hypothesis and Conjecture.* Pray is not this enough to confront a Suspicion with? We are talking now about their Suspicion, *That Christ did not rise, because he did not appear in Publick.* For I have shewn already, *That there is no Inference to be made, in the way of direct Argumentation; so that there is nothing left for us to consider in the Case, but a bare Suspicion.* And if we go no farther than bare Surmise in our Reasonings, but let the Matter rest there; I can't see what they can demand farther, nor what Reason there is to expect positive Argument,



ment, where there is nothing but pure Doubt and Distrust, oppos'd on the other side.

However, if I shew, *That what I alledg here, is not mere Hypothesis and Conjecture; but something supported by Experience and plain Matter of Fact;* then, I hope, this *Suspicion* of theirs must vanish, and stand for nothing; at least, unless they can find Reasons that shall be in all respects, of equal *Value and Authority* to support it. That is, they must produce Reasons founded upon as plain and clear Matter of Fact and Experience, to justify them in *suspecting*, *That Christ did not rise from the Dead, because he did not shew himself publickly after his (pretended) Resurrection:* as I am oblig'd to produce, in order to shew, *That Almighty God might not see fit to gratify us, with so publick a Demonstration of the Truth and Reality of our Saviour's Resurrection, as we might think, would have been the most serviceable and advantageous to Mankind.*

This I think is stating the Matter fairly on both sides. And therefore, I shall proceed directly to the Work incumbent on me; leaving these Gentlemen to take care of their own Part, which they must do to very good purpose, or otherwise, quite give up their *Suspicion* in the present Case.

## S E C T. LXIII.

**N**OW in order to this, I must consider what force there is, in that other Reasoning of theirs, *viz. That the great Ends of the Conviction and Satisfaction of the World, and consequently, of God's Glory in the Propagation of the Gospel and* *Salva-*

*Salvation of Mankind, would have been far more effectually obtain'd, if Jesus Christ had shewn himself as openly and familiarly amongst Men, after his Death, as he us'd to do before. For since matters were not order'd thus, they think they have Scope enough to conclude the whole Story to be a mere Jest; and that upon this Pretence, viz. That 'tis not to be imagin'd, that an infinitely wise and good Being, should not take the most direct and effectual Methods, both for the Advancement of his own Glory and the Good of Mankind.*

And they are certainly in the right of it, when they argue, *That God Almighty would be sure to chuse the properest Methods for the Advancement of his own Glory and the Happiness of his Creatures.* Not that I think they are in reality much concern'd about that matter, because I firmly believe, and indeed 'tis scarce possible, but that some very mean and little Notions of the *Divine Being*, must be at the bottom of that so vigorous and warm Opposition to *Christianity*, which these Gentlemen make. However, this may serve them for a Pretence, in the way of Argument; and for that Reason, I am oblig'd to have as much regard to it, as if they spoke the very Sense of their Hearts, and had the most becoming Notions of God imaginable. And upon the same score likewise, they lie as open to our Arguments; as they would do, if they had really the same thoughts of the Divine Power, Wisdom, Omnipresence, Goodness, Holiness and Truth, which the *Christians* themselves have. For since they pretend to have the same in the main, it is one and the same thing, in the way of Reasoning, as if they had; because we can proceed only upon the bottom of what Men pretend to, and must draw our Consequences accordingly.

## S E C T. LXIV.

LET them therefore resolve this Question. *Would it not be infinitely easy, for the Supreme Being, to discover himself with so much brightness to the World; that no part of Mankind should ever doubt of his Existence, or form a wrong Notion of his glorious Perfections, or worship and serve him in a profane and irreverent, or a ridiculous and fantastical manner?*

By what these Gentlemen themselves profess to know and believe of the Nature of God; they cannot think that the barbarous Rites and Customs of the *Pagan* World, are either agreeable to, or any way worthy of him: That he should think himself honour'd by such a Jargon of impertinent Ceremonies, or be pleas'd to see Mankind pour out one another's Blood at his Altars: That he delights to be thought of so oddly and indecently by the various People of the World, who do not glorify him as God, but abound in vain and foolish Imaginations, *changing his Glory into an Image made like to corruptible Man, to Birds and four-footed Beasts, and creeping things.*

In a word, whatever wrong Notions there are of God in the World; whatever Irregularities and Indecencies in Worship; whatever Deviations from *that simple and genuine way of serving him, according to the Principles of pure Natural Religion, after these Gentlemens own Mode:* how might all these Evils have been prevented, or at least perfectly cur'd, by some open and publick Manifestations of God to Mankind; which he could as easily make, as he can bring about  
any

any other Event whatsoever, in the World of Nature?

Alas! may we say, if this were but so, What excellent Order would the World be in? What Reverence and devout Regard to that God, who should thus convincingly discover himself, would there be in all Places? The Fool that now says in his Heart, *There is no God*, would then think after quite another manner. And those Fools likewise, who say, *The Lord has forsaken the Earth*, and neither minds nor cares what is done by the Children of Men; would be struck with an awful Sense of his Presence, and Inspection of their Ways. Pure Religion and Vertue, Harmony and Peace, would flourish and abound all the World over; and thereby an infinite deal of Mischief and Disorder be prevented (upon this *Hypothesis*) according to our best Judgment and Apprehension of things. What a fine Scheme is this! If we poor shallow Beings might be allow'd to argue, and draw up our own Proposals for the Regulation of the World; what delicate Systems, in our own Conceit, should we compose?

But let us tremble at the Thoughts of that Presumption, of calling the Ways of God, our Supreme Lord and Sovereign, into question.

*We dare not so much as think, it would have been better, if he had order'd Matters thus, with respect to the whole Race of Mankind; than now it is, and shall be, even tho he is pleas'd to permit so much Confusion and Disorder at present.* And therefore, 'tis infallibly certain, he has infinitely wise and holy, and infinitely gracious and good Reasons too, in this particular Dispensation to the World. But those Reasons are above us, and we must not inquire. His Ways are unsearchable, and his

his Judgments past finding out. As the Heavens are high above the Earth ; so are all his Thoughts and Ways above ours. We may highly dishonour and displease him by our Curiosity ; but we can never give our selves the least Satisfaction by it. Our Business is to be humble and modest ; to look after things that are plain and reveal'd, and leave all secret things to God, to whom alone they belong.

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## S E C T. LXV.

**N**OW from hence we proceed to argue thus:

*If the great Ends of God's Glory, and the Good of Mankind, are sufficiently consulted and provided for, as we know for certain they are, in this Dispensation of things ; wherein Men are oblig'd to argue from the mere Light of Nature and Reason, upon the Works of God in the Creation, and thereby form their Notions of him, and their Duty to him, and what sort of Service they should pay him ; tho at the same time 'tis plain, that in so doing, they run into infinite Absurdities and Inconveniencies, grossly abusing Human Nature it self, and reflecting on the Majesty of Heaven : And if they are left thus without any such helps, as Revelation, Prophecy, Inspiration, or any other sorts of Notices from Heaven, to put them into the right way, and direct them how to glorify God, as he should be glorify'd by them ; according to the avow'd Principles and Notions of our Deists : In a word, if God sees fit to withhold all such open Demonstrations of himself, as would be a present and effectual Remedy for all these Evils ; and are as easy to him, as to make his*



his Sun to shine, and his Rain to fall upon this Earth: If these things be so, *Then how is his Glory, or the Good of Mankind concern'd, tho the World had not a publick Demonstration of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection?* I desire they would fairly shew us that.

In short, either the *Deists* believe, *God Almighty to be such a Being, that he does not care how and in what manner he is serv'd by reasonable Creatures; and provided they do but perform some Acts of Homage and Devotion to him, is pleas'd with what they do, let it be ever so unseemly, or ever so ridiculous and fantastical; and that he matters not, whether they believe his Existence, or have right or wrong Notions of his Perfections; and consequently, that sutable Notions and Apprehensions of his Nature, or a regular and seemly Worship of him, are of no consequence at all to the Happiness of Mankind: Or else they believe the contrary of all this.*

If they believe the *former*, then how can they ever offer to tell us, *of the Concern of God's Glory, and the general Good of Mankind, in the publickness of the Demonstration of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection?* For (were it possible, that the infinitely wise and good God should be such a sort of Being as this) pray might he not be as negligent of the Affairs of Mankind in one Case, as in the other? Might he not make the Cure for Mens *disbelief of the Gospel*, as little pompous and extraordinary; as that for their *Atheism*, their *Blasphemy*, their horrid *Idolatry and Superstition*? Let these Gentlemen think of that, and tell me which of the Divine Perfections, is more deeply concern'd in one of these Cases, than the other.

If they believe the *latter*, then let them shew me, how they account for the *Care, and Love, and Goodness of God, and his Regard to his own Glory*, in this present Dispensation towards the World; which is left in such a wretched Condition, for want of that Light which he could so easily impart to it, even without Miracles: That I may try, whether I cannot upon the very same, or upon Principles in all respects as justifiable, shew them how I account for the *Care, and Love, and Goodness of God, and his Regard to his own Glory*, in that other Dispensation of his Providence towards the World, in not giving such a publick Demonstration of the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*, as such wise Creatures as we are, might think fitting and necessary. One of these two things they must believe, and 'tis equal to me which of them 'tis.

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## S E C T. LXVI.

**H**OWever, if these Gentlemen consider'd the matter a little, they would find an exact Uniformity and Agreement in the ways of God, in both these Dispensations; I mean with respect both to *Natural and Reveal'd Religion*. On one side, they have all his glorious Works in External Nature, the Wonders of his Providence and Government of the World, the admirable Frame and Constitution of their own rational Natures; all these, to furnish them with Premises, for just and fitting Conclusions, concerning the Nature of God, and the Obligations his Creatures lie under to him.

On the other side, he has order'd matters so, that we have all the *Data* requisite to a strictly rational and convincing Evidence; so that we can conclude the *Resurrection of Christ* to be true, by all those Rules and Methods of Reasoning, which we depend upon as just and sound in all other Cases, and which if they are not so, the whole World is nothing else but mere Scene and Collusion. But on neither side, are there *such kinds or degrees of appeal to our Senses*, as we in our Notions might think the most advantageous, nay, and certain, to do the great Work of opening the Eyes of all Mankind. But as well, with respect to his own Being and Perfections, as the *Resurrection* of his Son *Jesus Christ* from the Dead; God having endow'd us with most excellent Powers and Faculties, has thought fit to leave us to exercise and employ them, in the drawing such Conclusions about these matters, as the Laws of our own reasonable Natures put us upon making, from the *Data* or Premisses he presents us with, in the Nature of things abroad. And thus he obliges us to act as Men, and makes our Faith to be, in all senses, a most rational Duty. Not that we are thus absolutely given up into our own hands, so that the Success depends solely and intirely upon our own Application. *For as God is so merciful and compassionate, that he will expect no more of us, than the Powers and Helps, and favourable Circumstances he places us in, will enable us to perform; so he is ready to superadd special Grace and Assistance, to all the ordinary Advantages he affords us; for the clearing up of our Doubts, and helping us to surmount the Difficulties that lie in our way; provided we be but tractable and industrious, and do what Creatures so made as we are, ought to do, and may do, by common Helps alone,*  
with-

without the Assistance of that extraordinary Grace to carry us farther.

And thus I have said, what I hope may be a full and compleat Answer, to what is or may be alledg'd by the *Deists*, concerning the Privacy of our Saviour's *Resurrection*, or his not appearing to the World in publick as before.

## S E C T. LXVII.

**B**UT after all, there are these two things still to be said, which I could wish these Gentlemen would take some notice of. And indeed, 'tis all the Answer that need ever be given to this Objection of theirs: Only I was willing to trace the matter a little, and by that means shew them, 'tis a Point they ought never to insist upon, because they can never possibly conclude any thing from it.

First, *They must never pretend to make the Christians believe, that this is any real Difficulty with them; or that they would have been a Jot more dispos'd, to have believ'd the Gospel, if Christ Jesus had shewn himself ever so publickly and familiarly after his Resurrection.*

For even in that Case, their Belief of the Truth of this great Article of the *Christian Faith*, must have stood upon the very same Foundation of *Moral Evidence*, that it must do now in the present Circumstances.

If every thing had been manag'd in this Affair exactly to their own Hearts wish, yet still they must have had recourse to those very Proofs which they now despise, and call ridiculous and insufficient. And who that sees them explode and  
run

run down all Evidence of this kind, and (with infinite Absurdity) demand Demonstration for every thing they believe; can be so weak as to imagine, they would have had any manner of regard to it, in this Case? Yes, say they—*If Christ had appear'd in the Temple, and other Places of publick Resort, as he us'd to do before his Death, the Truth of his Resurrection had been plain to every body; and it would have rais'd so publick and general a talk in the World, and impress'd the thing so deep on the Minds of Men, that the belief of it would never have worn out, and no body could have deny'd it.*

Well argu'd! *If Christ had appear'd in Places of publick Resort, &c. then so and so.*

But how must you have known, that he did appear in those Places of publick Resort? You see the matter sticks there, and there it will stick.

Pray how should you *Deists* who live seventeen hundred Years after all this, come to be assur'd, *That there were such familiar Appearances of Christ, that there was such a general Talk, such a prevailing Conviction, such a firm Persuasion of the Truth of the thing at that time?* You pretend you would have believ'd, if it had been so; but how would you have satisfy'd your selves that it was so? Must you not have done the very same thing then, that you must do now, if you ever believe the *Christian Religion*; that is, *Examine the Accounts of Witnesses, search into their Characters and Qualifications, and at last depend upon their Testimony as true, when you have found it to have all the Marks of rational Credibility?*

Whatever Evidence, whatever convincing Proofs of the Reality of our Saviour's *Resurrection*, Mankind at that time might have; yet with respect to you, at this time, all the Advantage and Efficacy



ficacy of that Proof, stands upon the same Foundation exactly, that the Force and Efficacy of the Proof, which we offer you now in the present Circumstances, does stand upon. And therefore, upon the same score that you pretend to be dissatisfy'd, and plead the Uncertainty and precarious Nature of the Evidence, you now have for the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*; you might, and you must have been dissatisfy'd, with the Evidence offer'd you in those other Circumstances. For Evidences of the same nature, and convey'd after one and the same manner, must and will have the same sort of Effect. And consequently, all your Talk upon this Head is but jest, and you *act a Part*, when you tell us, you should have believ'd, if things had been thus and thus.

And to put this yet farther (if possible) out of dispute; I'll shew you, that you can be Unbelievers, in Cases that were actually as publick and notorious, as (you pretend) you could wish the *Resurrection* had been.

## S E C T. LXVIII.

**F**OR, *Secondly*, you reject all the Miracles of *Christ Jesus*. And it is not credible, that you would have had regard to any Testimonies concerning the *Resurrection*; when you make so very light of all the Accounts of those wonderful Works of our Saviour; which had they been Lyes and Forgeries, 'tis demonstrable, *That Christianity must have been bootied out of the World many Ages ago.*

You

You won't believe (tho it stands attested in such Records, as you have none any way comparable to them, for the Truth of any thing else that you believe) — *That Jesus Christ went about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of Sickness, and all manner of Diseases amongst the People.*

— *That his Fame went throughout all Syria, and the Regions round about; and they brought unto him all sick People, that were taken with divers Diseases and Torments, and those who were possess'd with Devils, and those who were Lunatick, and those who had the Palsy; and he healed them. — That great Multitudes follow'd him, and sought to touch him; and there went Virtue out of him, and he healed them all. — That when the Inhabitants of a Country had notice of his approach, they publish'd it thro all the Region round about, and began to carry about in Beds, those that were sick, where they heard he was; and wheresoever he enter'd, into Villages, or Cities, or Countries, they laid the Sick in the Streets, and besought him that they might touch, if it were but the Border of his Garment; and as many as touched him, were made whole. — That he wrought these Wonders in the Presence of the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, who came out of every Town of Galilee and Judæa; and did themselves partake of the Salutary Effects of his Power; and were amaz'd, and glorify'd God, and being fill'd with fear, cry'd out, They had seen (παράδοξα) strange and unaccountable things.*

You won't believe these matters upon Testimony, tho declar'd to be done in the most open and publick manner imaginable.

Even when you are told, *That the Multitude proclaim'd the wonderful Works of Christ Jesus; that they glorify'd God, who had given such Power to Man; cry'd out, astonish'd — He hath done all things well, he maketh the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak, &c. and with Authority he commandeth the unclean Spirits, and they come forth: nay, tho great Numbers of those who beheld his Works, actually believ'd on him, and became his Followers, declaring to all Men, that God had now visited his People, and that a great Prophet was risen up amongst them.*

You are not mov'd with those many Appeals which the Apostles did with the utmost Confidence and Assurance, make to the World, concerning the Truth of these Facts; tho they did it ever so publicly, and refer'd to them, as things that were commonly known, and pass'd undisputed every where. *Jesus of Nazareth* (says St. Peter, speaking to a very numerous Assembly) *was a Man approv'd of God amongst you, by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God wrought by him, in the midst of you; as you your selves also know.* And in another place, *You know* (the τὸ γινόμενον ἔνι υἱ) *the thing that was done throughout all Judæa, &c. viz. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Ghost and with Power; who went about doing Good, and healing all that were oppress'd of the Devil; for God was with him.*

Now this had been the most prodigious Degree of Folly and Stupidity, that Men could ever have been guilty of; if the Facts they appeal'd to had not been notorious, and impossible ever to be deny'd, with any Face of Modesty and Truth.

And accordingly you find, or may find if you please, *That there never was an Unbeliever of the Old Times, who ever dar'd solemnly to dispute, or*  
call

call the Truth of them in question; but they all own'd and took them for granted.

And as 'tis certain, they would never have done this, if they had had a Prospect of any possible Success, from their Attempts to render the Facts themselves questionable; so 'tis plain, that all their little shuffling endeavours to eclipse the Reputation of them, were the genuine Effects of the same Cause. 'Twas this Conviction, that put them upon those pitiful and wretched Evasions, to solve the Business something tolerably to the unthinking part of Mankind, and excuse themselves from the Imputation of downright *irrational* Infidelity.

We have observ'd before, what a sort of account *Julian* gave of these matters to the World.

Nor does *Celsus* solve them a jot better, but rather worse (if possible :) for by supposing our Saviour, to have made use of \* *Magick Arts*, in the working of his Miracles; he takes all the Facts themselves for granted, and plainly shews they were such, as the World made no question of the Truth of.

And the *Jews* likewise, who sometimes ascrib'd those Miracles to the Virtue of the שם בן ארבע אותיות, the *Nomen quatuor litterarum*; at other times thought fit to ascribe them to the same Arts of *Incantation*; as *Origen* expressly tells us.

\* Κατηγορεῖ δ' ἐν τοῖς ἐξῆς καὶ ὁ Σωτῆρς, ὡς μετέωρα συντηθέντα αὐτῷ ἐδόξε παρὰ φύσιν πεποιημέναι. *Orig. adv. Cels. Lib. i. Pag. 7.*

And again — Ἀυτὸν (Ἰησοῦν) σκόπον τραφέντα, μιδαρηήσαντα, εἰς Ἀγρίππον δυνάμεων τιγαν περαθέντα, ἐκᾶθεν ἐπαρελθεῖν, Θεὸν δὲ ἐκείνας τὰς δυνάμεις ἐαυτὸν ἀναγορεύοντα. *Lib. prædict.*

And those who set up *Workers of Miracles and Prodigies, in the Heathen World*, in opposition to *Jesus Christ*; did evidently allow the truth of what he did, by those very endeavours to find out some to match him.

I say, they were certainly appriz'd of the truth of the things themselves. Otherwise \* *Hierocles* would never have talk'd of those ὀλίγαι τερατεῖαι, for which our Saviour was reckon'd to be a God in the *Christian World*. Nor would others of them have made such a Blunder, as to say, that their *Apuleius*, † *Apollonius*, and others besides, did things as great, or even greater, than our *Jesus*.

In a word, there could be no doubt amongst Mankind in those days, whether *Christ Jesus* did really perform such astonishing Works or no; since the *Christians* so frequently and openly appeal'd to the publick *Acts and Monuments of the Roman Empire*, in which they were recorded. Thus some of the antient Apologists, || refer'd to

\* Ἡμεῖς μὲν πᾶσι ταῖς πεποιηκότα ἔ δεδν ἀλλὰ θεοῖς κεραισὺν ἀνδρῶν ἡγάμεθα, οἱ δὲ δὴ ὀλίγας τερατείας τινας, † Ἰνσὺν θεδν ἀναγορεύουσι. Hierocl. de Philostr. apud Euseb. advers. Hierocl.

† Nil amplius Dominum (Iesum) quam alii Homines facere potuerunt, fecisse vel gessisse mentiuntur: Apollonium siquidem suum nobis, & Apuleium, aliosque Magica artis Homines in medium proferunt, quorum majora contendunt extitisse Miracula. Marcell. Epist. 4. ad August.

|| Tertul. Apol. C. 21. & 5.

I am sensible these Acts of Pilate are call'd in question. But tho there be nothing of that kind now in the World; yet that there were in reality such genuine Acts once in being, I believe is not reasonably to be doubted. For it appears from Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. Lib. 9. that there were some false and spurious Acts set about, in order to sink the Credit of the true ones. And Epiphanius, de Quartadecimanis, mentions (I think) some Appeals made by Hereticks, to these Acts Pilati.

the



*the Acts* of Pontius Pilate, and the Account given by him concerning our Saviour, to the Emperor *Tiberius*. Which Appeals, had they not had visible and notorious Matter of Fact to have supported them; the *Acta* themselves, or some very authentick Copies of them, being as easy to be produc'd, as they were readily quoted; *Christianity* would have needed no worse blow, than such Apologies (which were not made to overturn, but to vindicate and defend it) would certainly have given it.

So that now I say, whatever else is to be alledg'd against the Miracles of *Christ Jesus*, 'tis plain, that underhand Management and *Secrecy*, can never be objected. They were all done in the open Light, in the Face of the Sun, while multitudes of all Comers, Enemies and Friends, Foreigners and Natives, Learned and Unlearned, look'd on and beheld with wonder.

Yes, they'll say, — But then the Question is, *Whether all this was not Juggle and Legerdemain; either mere Slight and Artifice, or else the Peoples Senses some way or other impos'd upon, with Fiction and Shew, instead of Realities?*

*Ansiv.* There can be no Fence against extravagant Suppositions and Surmises. When Men *reason*, they are under some Laws and Rules: but when they come to doubt, and query, and suppose, without any manner of Ground or Occasion for so doing, from the Nature and Circumstances of things; they as good as declare to all the World, that they will not be dealt with in the way of Argument: And by so doing, they shew plainly enough, upon what foot it is the Controversy stands.

But if they could once venture to let themselves be guided by that, which Mankind have

agreed to call sincere and unprejudic'd Reason; they would soon renounce all those little Refuges and Evasions, and forbear to make a Defence, so very trivial, in a matter of such grand Importance.

In the mean time, we can't have so little an Opinion of the Understanding of these Gentlemen, as to imagine, that whatever they say, they do in good earnest believe —

*That Persons afflicted with the most tormenting Maladies and Diseases, should be juggled into perfect Ease and Health, and cur'd by mere Legerdemain.*

*That blind Men should see, the Lame walk, the Deaf hear, the Dumb speak, Lepers be cleans'd, and dead Men come to Life; by mere Fancy and Imagination.*

*Or that the Senses of whole Multitudes, should be impos'd upon to such a degree, that they should all fancy together, they saw, heard, spake, eat and drank, and repeated these Actions many times over, and that in different Places and Circumstances too; and yet after all did nothing of all this, but were either asleep, or in an Extasy, or under the Power of some Charm or Witchcraft all the while.*

For example: *That five thousand Men at one time, and four thousand at another (besides Women and Children) should persuade themselves, they fed only upon a few Loaves and Fishes, and should publish it to all the Country that they did do so, and refer them to Time, Place, and Persons present; and yet all the while in reality, have been at a magnificent Feast, where Plenty and Variety of all Provisions, fit to entertain such vast Multitudes, was set before them.*

If these things may be so, what are the Senses of Mankind good for? Or how are they ever  
to

to be depended upon? Or who will or can ever believe a *Deist*, attesting any thing as matter of *Sense and Experience*; when by his own Principles, People can't believe their Senses; no, not thousands of them together, and that in the most *common and vulgar Actions* of Human Life?

Indeed, if it were in a matter any thing remote and out of the way, or that requir'd nice Reason and Philosophy, for People to assure themselves by; there might be some room for a Difficulty to be started: but when it comes so low as to *eating and drinking, to the distinguishing of Foods, and knowing that a Man has this, and not the other thing before him; or that he has only so much, and not a Quantity ten thousand times greater*: then if Men can't be allow'd to make use of their Eyes and Taste, so as to be out of all doubt, whether things be so or no, as those Senses represent them; we had e'en as good be without them, and say, *That God Almighty has endow'd us with deceitful and precarious Faculties, that can never be of any service to us; and so quit all Pretensions to the use of them for the time to come.*

In short, there are but these following Conclusions possibly to be made in the Case, and a Man must of necessity come to one or other of them; and he can come but to one.

Either, First, *These accounts of the Miracles of Christ Jesus, were absolute Fictions in their very Principle and Foundation; he never pretending or attempting to do any of those mighty Works in publick, which are reported of him; but was only falsely said to do so, by some who had a mind to impose upon Mankind.*

Or, Secondly, *That he did not work any true Miracles; but the Peoples Senses were some way or*

*other abus'd, so that they believ'd he really did work Miracles, when in truth he did not.*

Or, Thirdly, *That the Spectators were not any way deluded, and knew very well he wrought no Miracles; but were all (both Enemies and Friends; nay, the very Jews themselves, who daily sought occasions against him) united in a close Confederacy, to make the World believe, that he did do the strangest and most surprizing things. So that while some blaz'd the Report of them abroad, the rest kept their Counsel, and never offer'd to discover the Trick, but manag'd the matter with so much Craft, and such an exact harmonious Correspondence amongst themselves; that the Story should go current about, that Christ Jesus was a Worker of Miracles and Prodigies, and no body ever be able to disprove it.*

Or else, Fourthly, *That Christ Jesus did really perform these wonderful Works, and that the Accounts given of them by the Christian Writers, are true.*

This is all that can be concluded, with respect to the present Affair. And he that does not conclude the last, will find but small odds, whichsoever of the other three he chuses. For—

It will be a very difficult and arduous Undertaking, to shew, *That there is nothing but mere Romance and Forgery in all those Accounts we have, of the Miracles of Jesus Christ.*

And for these Gentlemen to bring *their own Senses* off, with any tolerable Reputation, after such a Scandal thrown upon the Senses of Mankind in general, by supposing Multitudes of People together, to be impos'd upon, in some of the *most common* Actions of Life; and that not for once or twice, but in a *continued Series*, for Years together: I say, to do this solidly and well, I believe will not be a Task less difficult than the former.

Nor



Nor will it be less than either of the other two, to set in a clear Light, that *strange Confederacy*, by which such Numbers of People, so variously affected, temper'd and princip'd; were all link'd together in one common Design, of keeping the matter to themselves, and baffling all the Artifices and Endeavours of the rest of Mankind; some of whom lay under all the Obligations that Men could possibly lie under, to enquire into the true state of the Case, and satisfy themselves effectually, whether *Christ Jesus* was an Impostor or no.

And thus I have shewn, for what Reasons the *Christians* believe, that how publick soever the Appearances of *Christ Jesus* after his *Resurrection* had been; yet their Adversaries would still have made matter of Cavil and Exception, and (in a word) have been the very same Unbelievers that now they are.

I shall be ready to own a Breach of Charity, when I find it is prov'd to be one: In the mean time, I have shewn them our Reasons for't.

And this was the *First* of those two things I offer'd to propose, to cut off all their Objection upon this Head.

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## S E C T. LXIX.

**B**UT, *Secondly*, these Gentlemen should remember, *That all this talk about our Saviour's publick Appearance after his Resurrection, is quite from the main Point in hand.*

For our great Concern, is about the *Resurrection* it self; whether it were true in *Fact* or no: Whether *Christ* did really rise from the Dead, or  
was



was only falſly and deceitfully ſaid, and reported to do ſo. And therefore, if there be ſufficient Evidence to make that Point clear; we are not concern'd about his ſhewing, or not ſhewing himſelf openly to the World; nor have we any thing to do, to offer Reaſons either one way or the other. Let us keep to the great Queſtion that lies before us, and not fly off to a Circumſtance that is of little ſignificancy, and from whence 'tis demonſtrable, nothing is to be infer'd. The Buſineſs is, have we Evidence, or have we not? Are the Proofs we go upon *Concluſive*, or are they not? *Let us decide this Point, and then all is decided.* 'Tis here that the ſtreſs of the matter will lie; and hither muſt be our laſt Reſort. If the Evidence be good, by all the *Laws of Human Nature*; I do not care for ten thouſand Difficulties, if they were ever ſo inſuperable, provided they are not ſuch as infer ſimple Impoſſibility, or palpable Abſurdity. When I am ſure of Fact, I am ſure of all that is of any moment to me. Indeed, if I have ſufficient *Data* to argue out more, well and good; if not, I'll hold faſt the main Point, and bid defiance to all Objections whatſoever. And therefore, if theſe Gentlemen amus'd the World, with ſtarting ever ſo many odd Queries and Surmiſes, about *Why* and *How*, and to what *Purpose*, and all the other Modes and Circumſtances they can poſſibly think of, with reſpect to this matter of our Saviour's *Reſurrection*; and if they were ſo intricate and perplex'd, that I could not diſcover the Fallacy, or demonſtrate the Abſurdity of any one of them all (the very Reverse of which, is apparently true, as to any of their Objections, from what Topick ſoever deriv'd) yet with *Circumſtances of convincing Evidence, according*

ing to the Nature of things, for the Truth of the Fact; I should be at a Certainty: nor would all those Difficulties give me the least degree of uneasiness.

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## S E C T. LXX.

**P**ERhaps these Gentlemen may think, *A Man would do very ill, to make no more of insolvable Difficulties attending a Matter of Belief; and therefore, notwithstanding the Evidence talk'd of, for the Proof of the thing, it may be, they call his Belief in such a Case, by the ill Names of Credulity, and Bigotry, or obstinate Resolution, to believe things only of his own side.*

But they must not do thus: For if they do, the Charge will come home upon themselves; and they will, without remedy, be prov'd by their own Rule, to be credulous and bigotted beyond Example. The *Christians* will not be obnoxious in this Case, because they do not form any such Notions of Bigotry and Credulity; so that all the burden of the Argument will lie upon themselves, and they'll not find it easy, fairly to throw it off.

I suppose these Gentlemen (some of them at least) can't but know, that there are abundance of Problems in *Physical* matters, the Solutions of which are reckon'd desperate, even by those who are the most seen in those Studies. Indeed, to speak the plain truth of the matter, there's scarce any thing at all in Nature, which we do know the *Modus* of, or can explain from its first Principles. *Motion* it self in general, *Gravitation*, *Sensation*, the *Formation of an Animal*

*mal Body*; are demonstrably above all Solution, by any Mechanical Laws whatsoever. And to enter into a detail of *particular* Phenomena, that are so likewise; would be an endless Work. In a word, all our Knowledge of the *Universe*, is but a Collection of some particular Circumstances of Fact, with the Consequences resulting from them; some of which lie nearer, and others more remote from view; without any penetrating or looking into the prime Causes and Reasons of them:

Now I would ask of these Persons, whether they can satisfy our demands here, and shew *the exact Modus and Ratio of all, or any of those Appearances in Nature*, which were just now mention'd? Can they solve all the Difficulties, that shall be propos'd to them upon those Heads?

I take it for granted, *they'll say they cannot*; nor is there any great degree of Modesty in confessing such Ignorance.

Very well: But notwithstanding this confess'd Ignorance, and Inability to solve the Difficulties of these Appearances; you are fully assur'd of the Truth and Reality of them: You don't think the Existence of them is questionable, because you find it impossible to account for the *Modus and Ratio* of them.

No, they'll easily allow that.

I ask then, in the next place, *Are not you Deists, who lay down such a Rule as this, wretched Bigots, by your own Principles?* Are not you obstinate and credulous beyond all Men, to stand so peremptorily to the Truth of thousands and thousands of things, when you can't solve the least Difficulty belonging to any of them all?

No! they'll say: *For the things you are now talking of, are plain and evident Matter of Fact to our Senses:*

*Senses : and no Difficulties whatsoever, can be of any Consideration, in such a Case as that.*

Our Eyes tell us, *That Bodies do gravitate and move ; that such sort of Beings as those which are call'd Animals, do actually exist and perform their Operations : and therefore, tho we can give no Answer to all the mysterious Questions that may be propos'd upon these and other Heads ; yet because the things themselves are obvious to Sense, so that we are sure of the Reality of them ; for this reason we have no regard to the Difficulties that may possibly be urg'd, with respect to the Modus or Reasons of them.*

Who would not think now, at first sight, that there was really something very pertinent and strong, in this Reply ? It seems to leave a Man under a sort of Necessity of concluding, or at least very handsomly to incline and dispose him to conclude, *That tho in matters of plain Sense, we may fairly overlook Difficulties that are impossible to be solv'd ; yet that in some other Cases, insuperable Difficulties may be ground enough for calling the Truth of things in question ; and it may be fond Credulity to believe them, notwithstanding the Evidence offer'd for the Proof of their being real and certain.*

If this be not the meaning of it, it has no meaning at all, that's any way contrary to what I have been advancing. For if insuperable Difficulties are not a sufficient Ground for calling in question the Truth of some things, for which notwithstanding we have all the Evidence that the intrinsick Nature of those things does allow of : then I was right in saying, *That the Stress of all our Dispute, lying upon the Point of Evidence ; it was no matter, if there were ever so many perplex'd and intricate Questions started about it, which we could give no manner of answer to.*

And



And I was in the right likewise in asserting, *That it was not Bigotry and Credulity, firmly to adhere to the Belief of a thing, tho attended with such Difficulties ; when there was such Evidence for it, as in the Nature of things, is just and proper, for a matter of that kind.*

And consequently, the Reply carries nothing along with it that thwarts any thing which I have laid down.

But on the other hand, if that be the true Scope and Meaning of it, which I have represented ; then I say, it is absolutely false, and is fit to satisfy none, but those that will be satisfy'd with Sophistry and Paralogism.

The Proof of which, is thus plainly made out.

For since (by PROP. IX. Part II.) the intrinsic difference, in the Natures of those things which are the Objects of our Knowledg, infers a proportional necessary Difference in our Methods of proving, or assuring our selves of the Truth of them : since also, *by virtue of the Constitution of the World, and the Circumstances of Human Nature therein, we are under a strict Necessity of assenting to some things as true, upon bare Moral Proof ; as well as of assenting to rigorous Demonstration, or believing the Testimony of our Senses :* Lastly, since 'tis equally inconsistent with the Perfections of God Almighty, and therefore equally impossible, that he should give a Delusion, in any Case whatsoever, all the Evidence which the Nature of things requires ; that he should impose upon our Understandings, in a Case of *Moral Proof*, any more than make all our *Mathematical Demonstrations* to be false and wrong, or that our Senses should give us a quite contrary account of things, to what they really are : since 'tis as contrary to his Justice, Goodness and

Vera-



Veracity, to do the one of these, as the other ; *Therefore when in any Case whatsoever, we have such Evidence for the Truth of things, as is agreeable to matters of that Rank and Order ; and when we have all that Evidence likewise, which the intrinsick Nature and Condition of those things, do require or allow of ; we are under a direct and positive Obligation, to assent to those things as true and real, and to stand by them as such, if there were ever so many Difficulties attending them, and those ever so insolvable.*

And this irrefragably demonstrates the Vanity of all that plausible Talk, on the other side, and shews it to be but Talk.

So that now I must tell these Gentlemen, that those Instances of the mysterious Problems in Nature, are valid and good ; and that their Pretence of overlooking those Difficulties, *upon the score of the obviousness of the things themselves, to Sense ;* is nothing but mere Amusement. And therefore, those Difficulties are to be urg'd upon them ; and they are oblig'd to solve them, if they can, or else for ever to give over the Talk of Bigotry and Credulity, where People admit things as true, upon plain and rational Evidence of Fact ; tho at the same time, the Reason and Modus of them are not to be accounted for.

However, all this reasoning is *ex abundanti*, and to let them see, how far the utmost Consequences they can draw, will run. For I think, 'tis sufficiently plain, that there are no insolvable Difficulties (tho for the advantage of the Argument, we have put the Case the other way, and suppos'd there were) attending the present Question, concerning the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

So that (as I said before) all the Dispute centers in this Question, *viz. Whether the Evidence*  
for

for the Truth of the Fact be strictly just, and in all respects sufficient to oblige us, as reasonable Creatures, to yield the Assent of our Minds thereto. And this is the Enquiry, that now lies before us. And as 'tis that which crowns and concludes all; so I shall endeavour to bestow an answerable Degree of Care in the Management of it, that the way to our great Conclusion may lie fair and open to us.

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## S E C T. LXXI.

**I** Come now therefore, to the *fourth and last* general Head, of the Method propos'd, viz. to shew —

*That there is actually such an Evidence, for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as does fully come up to all the Characters and Conditions of an Evidence, which obliges Human Understanding: Or that it is such, as lays an indispensable Obligation on every capable Subject, to whom that Doctrine is fairly represented, with its proper Evidences; to receive it as a certain Truth.*

Two things therefore are here to be done.

First, *We will state in order, the several Conditions of the Evidence we speak of; as what directly obliges the Understanding of Mankind.*

Secondly, *We will demonstrate, that the Evidence we have, for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, does fully come up to those Conditions.*

And, I suppose, this is all that can be demanded reasonably, in order to a Conclusion.

In

In order to the *First* of these, I must refer to what has been said, concerning the Nature of the Evidence here intended; at S E C T. III. Part II.

I have there given such an account of it, as contains all that is either needful to the present Purpose, or to make any Person of tolerable Understanding know what I mean.

So that there is nothing remaining for me to do, with respect to that matter; but only to branch out, what lies there summ'd up together, into proper Heads for our present Design.

And this I shall do, in the following Particulars.

*First, This Evidence is such, as being impartially weigh'd and consider'd, by the free Use of a Man's Reason, in all the common and allow'd ways of using it; would more powerfully incline him to the Belief of a thing propos'd, than any Objections to the contrary, when duly stated, and set in a just Light, would dissuade him from the Belief of that thing.*

*Secondly, Not only so: but 'tis such likewise, That if a Man should reject it, he must necessarily be forc'd upon such sort of Consequences, as the genuine and disinterested Sense of all Mankind, would condemn as absurd and wrong; and which even he himself, without making use of some bad Arts for managing his Understanding, contrary to its native Biass and Tendency, would not be able to digest; but must disown as irrational and absurd, when he came to reflect upon them, in a cool and serious Temper.*

*Thirdly, 'Tis such, as furnishes a Man with all those Media, which according to the Nature of the Case propos'd, are necessary to the making a perspicuous natural Conclusion; and by the help of which, he may*

likewise solve whatever Difficulties occur, upon such Principles, as Mankind in all resembling Cases, universally agree to argue themselves into a just Satisfaction and Assurance of the Truth of things by.

This is, in short, the Substance of that Account. So that the Conditions requir'd therein, and which therefore we must shew exactly to agree, to the Evidence we have for the Resurrection of Christ; are these:

*The Arguments alledg'd, must weigh down whatever Objections are started on the contrary side.*

*Those Arguments ought to be of such a kind and such only, as is proper and sutable to the Nature of the Case propos'd.*

*They should be such, that a Man may be made as sure of the truth of a thing, by them; as he ever is or can be, in any Case of the like Nature.*

*Absurd and irrational Consequences, must be the Result of the Denial of them.*

*Whatever Difficulties are propos'd, may be solv'd upon such Principles as the common Practice and Consent of Mankind has establish'd, and to which resort is always had in Cases of a similar Nature.*

And in judging of all this, 'tis requir'd also, That a Man should use his Reason in the most free and disinterested manner, and let his Understanding conclude, what by the Laws and Constitution of Human Nature, ought to be concluded from such and such Circumstances of things propos'd to it.

This

This Point thus stated and settled, I shall now demonstrate——

Secondly, *That the Evidence we have, for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, does fully come up to these Conditions.*

In order to this, let the following steps be well consider'd.

I have demonstrated at large, in Part II. the Validity and Obligatory Nature of *Moral Evidence*, together with the absolute Necessity we lie under, of admitting such kind of Evidence as this; and that not from uncertain Guesses and Surmises, but from *what is plain Matter of Fact, in Human Nature, and of Experience in the World.*

I have shewn, that according to the *Nature of things*, this sort of Proof is to be apply'd and made use of, for evincing the Truth of things, in Cases of the highest and *greatest Importance*, all one, as in those that are of less Moment, at PROP. IX. And therefore, that as there can be no Ground nor Pretence, for requiring any other sort of Proof, in this particular Case of the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*; so 'tis strictly Just and Rational, fully to acquiesce therein; provided it be such as carries every thing along with it, that the Laws and Constitution of the World, and the Circumstances of Human Nature in it, have made necessary, in order to our full Satisfaction and free Assent, in Cases of this kind.

I have farther made it appear, that the Testimony for the Fact of *Christ's Resurrection*, is so circumstantiated; that if it may be rejected, no Evidence of that nature is ever to be admitted amongst Mankind; but all *Moral Proof* must at once be thrown out of doors, and either *Sensi-*



*ble Proof* or *Mathematical Demonstration* be demanded and given, for every thing that is propos'd as a matter of Belief.

That it was as impossible, as any thing which is not *physically* and simply impossible, can be; that there should have been any Fraud committed by the Friends and Disciples of *Jesus Christ*: and that by all the Rules and Measures known in the World, for judging of Events of this kind; if there had been any fraudulent Management on the part of the Disciples, it must infallibly have been discover'd and laid open.

That all the plain and allow'd Marks of egregious Falshood and Imposture, appear'd thro the whole Behaviour and Conduct of the Enemies of *Jesus Christ*.

That they did, what guilty and self-condemn'd Men ought to have done, must necessarily do, and always actually do, in such Cases, to skreen Malice and Wickedness from Discovery, and to run down Truth that would expose them to the World.

Moreover, I have shewn, that the Supposition of Cheat and Imposture, in the matter of *Christ's Resurrection*, is attended with *the grossest Absurdities*, with such plain and manifest Contradictions, to all the known Experience, the stated Principles of Action, and Methods of procedure amongst Mankind; that a Man that should seriously advance, or stand by any such Notions as those, in any of the Affairs and Concerns of Human Life, would be given up, as lost to all common Sense and Understanding, and thought incapable of any rational intercourse with, or treatment from the rest of his Fellow-Creatures.

And these Consequences are evidently not strain'd or forc'd, but the native and genuine Result of the Hypothesis it self.

Lastly, I have shewn likewise, that if there be any certain Rules agreed to and receiv'd amongst Men, by which it may be known when an Objection carries weight and force along with it, and when it does not; that then, by all those Rules, there is no weight nor force, in any Objection offer'd by the *Deists*, against the Doctrine of *Christ's Resurrection*.

Now I say, *That all this laid together, amounts to an Evidence of the Conditions and Qualifications before-mention'd.*

And I demonstrate, that it does do so; by making the Application to each of those Condition, *severally and distinctly.*

First of all, I say, *That the Arguments alledg'd, to evince the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, do outweigh whatever Objections are started on the contrary side: And not only so, but I affirm likewise, That there is no manner of Proportion, and therefore no Comparison to be made, between the one and the other.*

For in those Arguments, there is nothing suppos'd; but what was either *plain and notorious Matter of Fact*, and own'd and allow'd to be such by all the Enemies of *Christianity*; or what *constant and vulgar Experience* justifies to be true, or what is perfectly agreeable to the most *impartial Reason and unanimous Sense of Mankind.*

If there be any thing else suppos'd, which is either contrary, or not fairly reducible, to one of these three Heads; let these Gentlemen, upon Examination, tell me where it lies. In the mean

time, the matter must rest there; and they may be sure, I would not put it upon that Issue, if I were not well assur'd, that they could never demonstrate me to be in the wrong in this Assertion, in any Point, of considerable Consequence to the Argument.

As for their *Objections*, 'tis certain, that they cannot possibly be founded on such Principles, as *Matter of Fact, Experience, Human Nature, and general Consent*; if our Arguments stand upon those Foundations: And I hope it is not vain to say, that they are propos'd in so perspicuous a manner; that any Person of tolerable Capacity, may presently see, whether they do stand upon those Foundations or no.

And therefore, the Conclusion is unavoidable, *That the Arguments do beyond comparison outweigh the Objections*; for Reasonings that have no solid and allow'd Principles to support them, can bear no proportion to those, which are supported by all that are solid and substantial.

And indeed, if a Man does but seriously consider, what is to be objected on the *Deists* side, with respect to our Saviour's *Resurrection*; if he does but set, what they say upon *the stealing away of the Body, the natural Impossibility of a Resurrection, and the want of publick ocular Demonstration*, in a clear Light; he will easily see, that all amounts to no more than mere Harangue, or Words adapted to the Purposes of Amusement and Deception; since by all the Laws of right Reason and Argument, there's nothing to be infer'd from them. And so apprehensive am I, of *the intrinsick Goodness and Validity*, of those Evidences which Divine Providence has given us, for the Ground and Support of our Belief in this Case; that I'll venture to affirm this, not only of  
any

any Objection, that they ever have propos'd for the time past, but of any likewise, that they ever shall for the time to come, invent, contrive and start, against this Doctrine. Nor is this at all more peremptory and bold, than what ought to be, or is consistent with Decency. And the reason is, because I can fully assure my self, *that God Almighty will never change the Nature and the Order of things*; so that that which is now intrinsically unjust and unreasonable, shall ever come to be just and reasonable; or on the other hand, that Arguments, which at one time do positively and directly conclude the Truth of a thing, should at another time become weak and sophistical. And unless he does do thus, whatever shall at any time be objected against the Truth of this Fact, must necessarily be insignificant and vain; because (I say) he has furnish'd us with such Reasons to conclude it, as can never possibly lose their Force, being founded on Principles, as stable as the World and Human Nature it self.

*Secondly, 'Tis evident likewise, That the Arguments alledg'd for the Truth of this Doctrine, are of such a kind, as is sutable to the Nature of the Subject; and that therefore it would be infinitely irrational and foolish, to expect or demand any other sort of Proof than that for it.*

The Case in Dispute, is a *Matter of Fact*; that is, a Point in its own nature not capable of *Mathematical* Demonstration, which therefore is not to be requir'd for it.

And as for *ocular* Demonstration, or *sensible* Proof; 'tis certain indeed, that the Truth of a Matter of Fact may be thus incontestably made

out, to those who are *Contemporaries* with it, and are on the Spot where, and when, it was brought to pass. But 'tis Nonsense and Contradiction, for others who come after, to talk of being convinc'd this way. And therefore, *sensible Proof* is to be excluded, from all Cases of this kind, where the Question is concerning *one individual Matter of Fact*; no less than strict *Demonstration* is, from all Matter of Fact in general; and that upon the same score too, *viz. simple Impossibility*.

However, as it is notoriously evident, and I have expressly shewn at PROP. VIII. that we may be fully and indubitably assur'd of the Truth of some Matters of Fact, whereof we are not our selves Eye-Witnesses; and that this is not only true in common Experience and Observation, but 'tis a Principle likewise, upon which all the Business, Commerce, Affairs and publick Management of Mankind, do absolutely depend:

So 'tis certain, that by the Arguments we have, to conclude the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*, a Man may be made as sure of it, as he can be of the Truth of any thing else, that he does not see with his own Eyes.

Let any Person tell me, by what Methods or upon what Principles, he assures himself of the Truth of any thing that he has not *ocular Demonstration* for; whether in the way of *History*, or *Civil Policy*, or *Trade and Dealing* in the World: and I'll shew him, that upon the very same sort of Principles (but strengthened with Circumstances of incomparably more Force and Advantage) he may believe, he ought to believe, and must be invincibly stubborn, or stupid, if he does not believe, *That Jesus Christ was really rais'd from the Dead*. And this would be a short way of bringing the Dispute to an Issue, if these  
Gentlemen



Gentlemen would but submit to it: For there are but these three Points to be examin'd.

First, *Whether they have not a full and compleat Assurance of the Truth of some Matters of Fact, whereof they themselves never were, nor could be, Eye-Witnesses?*

Secondly, *What Principles those are, upon which they reason themselves into this Assurance?*

Thirdly, *Whether upon the very same Principles, we cannot with equal Justice and much more Strength, assure our selves that it was Matter of Fact, that Jesus Christ rose from the Dead?*

I would desire no more than this. But—

*Thirdly, The Arguments offer'd to prove the Reality of our Saviour's Resurrection, are such; that by the Denial of them, a Man is forc'd upon Consequences, that are palpably false, and most intolerable absurd and ridiculous.*

He must suppose things, that not only never were done, but never can be done likewise, whilst the Constitution of the World, and Human Nature, remain unchang'd. He must lay down such Conclusions for true and certain, which every day's Experience and Acquaintance with Mankind, will shew him to be manifestly false and impossible. To justify this, we need only review that train of Consequences that attend the grand Deistical Hypothesis, viz. *That there was nothing but mere Juggle and Cheat, in all the matter of Christ's Resurrection; and which I have already endeavour'd to set in a clear Light, before the Reader, in another place. I shall not repeat here, what I have said there or elsewhere; but only add this, That the Consequences I have drawn upon these Gentlemen, with respect to this Matter, are so far from*  
being

being any of them unfairly drawn, or deceitfully represented; that they'll bear more and worse Aggravations still, than any I have loaded them withal: And that 'tis out of a decent Regard to the grave and serious Nature of the Subject, that I have forbore to lay open the Fanaticism and despicable Nonsense of *Deism*, in such a sort of way as it deserves.

*Fourthly, It is plain likewise, That by the Principles which the Christians go upon, they can solve whatever Difficulties are propos'd to them in this matter, and that in the same easy and natural way, which Men always proceed in, to give themselves a just Satisfaction, in all Cases of the like kind.*

For this end, let the Answers we have been oblig'd to return, up and down in several parts of this Treatise, to any Doubts, or Queries, or direct Objections propos'd on the side of the *Deists*; let them I say, be impartially weigh'd and examin'd by any Person, who is fit to be a Judg in such a Case; and let such a one determine, whether what I assert on this Head be not true. Have we wrongfully conceal'd any part of their Strength, or made their Objections appear foolish and ludicrous, on purpose to have an occasion of exposing them? Or rather have we not given them all the Scope and Advantage in the way of proposing them, that can fairly be desir'd or expected from any Adversary; and taken every Opportunity to express their Sense, in opposition to our own, where there was room for any thing of Value and Consequence to be said? Farther, have we ever been oblig'd to make use of any little Artifices, to avoid the Force of a Conclusion on their part; or any indirect round-

about

about Methods, in making a Reply to what they propose; or any quibbling ambiguous Terms, to blunder the Cause, and leave the Reader involv'd in Doubts, whether we speak to the purpose, and fight with the *Deists* or with our own Shadows?

Have we been forc'd to advance any arbitrary precarious *Hypothesis*; to lay down, or stand by any sort of Position, which is alien from the common Sense and Notions of Mankind, which thwarts general Usage and Practice, or subverts the establish'd Laws and Order of things?

Has any thing of this kind been done, in order to evade, or to get loose from any Objection of theirs, which we have had upon our hands?

If there has not, then this Article is clear. If there has, then it is incumbent on them, to shew us where this ill Management lies, and make it out that it is so.

In the *last* place, From all this, as well as from a Review of the thing it self, I hope 'tis sufficiently manifest, that our way of arguing has been all along disinterested and free; that we have not concluded, from Humour and Prejudice, but from *Nature and the Necessity of things*; and that if those Conclusions are in reality for us, and do serve our turn, and not that of the *Deists*; yet that it is not because we will have it to be so, or do make those Conclusions to run this way, against their own natural Drift and Tendency; but because God Almighty, in the *Order and Constitution of things*, has made it strictly rational, and therefore necessary for us to conclude after this manner: Nor can we do otherwise, without offering manifest Violence, to the Faculties he has endow'd us with.

Thus

Thus we have *apply'd* the Conditions and Qualifications of the Evidence describ'd at SECT. III. Part II. to the several Parts and Steps of the Evidence we have, for the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*; and upon the *Application* we have found, that they exactly agree to it: Or that the Evidence we have for the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, does in all respects fully come up to those Conditions.

From hence I infer—

*Therefore there is such an Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as actually induces an Obligation on all Men; to whom that Evidence is fairly propos'd, and who are capable of arguing upon it, after a due and regular manner; to give their Assent to it as a certain Truth.*

*But it is utterly impossible, that the Supreme Governour of the World (whose just and wise Providence presides over all things, and more especially over the Affairs and Concerns of reasonable Beings) should ever countenance an Imposture, with such an Evidence, as should lay an indispensable Obligation on rational Creatures, to give their Assent to it as a real Truth.*

*Therefore this was not an Imposture: But it was certain and undoubted Matter of Fact, that Jesus Christ did rise from the Dead. Q. E. D.*

## S E C T. LXXII.

**B**Efore I come to draw the proper *Inferences* from this most important *Conclusion*, I would put these Gentlemen in mind of one thing: and that is, That I expect something more than bare Assertion and Conjecture, to be offer'd on their part, in order to the answering of this Argument. For as I have not proceeded upon any such uncertain Foundations with them; they are not to proceed upon any such with me, in any Defence they shall think fit to make.

In short, to overturn my Argument, they must of necessity do one of these two things; and if it be so, that they can do neither of them, then all their other Efforts whatsoever, must necessarily be vain.

First, *They must either shew the Scheme I have gone upon, to be wrong in it self, or insufficient for my purpose: That the Principles I have made use of, are foreign to the Business, and will not in their own nature, serve for that End and Design which I have apply'd them to.*

Or Secondly, *Allowing the Scheme to be just and right in it self, they must evince, that I have been guilty of some fundamental Mistake in the Management of it.*

I say, a *fundamental* Mistake: for 'tis not a bare Slip or Inadvertency, if they discover any thing of that kind in the performance, that will break the Force of the Argument, as to  
them;



them; no more than an unaccurate Step in the Series of a Demonstration, will spoil the Conclusion, and make it of no Effect. What they are to do, is to find out some Error that's *essential* to the Business: and such as really makes the Conclusion faulty and irregular; that is, influences it so far, that it is indeed no Conclusion at all.

And this is what all Men ought to make their Aim and Scope, in all matters of Dispute, *viz.* to look to the Foundation-Principles, and see whether they be right or no: Because this is the shortest and most direct way to bring the matter to a Decision, and also shews a just regard to the great End of all Controversy, which is the Discovery of Truth, and that Men do not dispute for mere disputing sake.

These are the only possible ways of attacking the Argument; and they may make it either way, or if they please, both ways.

To prove the *Scheme it self* to be wrong or insufficient, they must shew, that it was a wrong or an insufficient way of going to work in this matter, to proceed after the following Method, *viz.*

First, To state the Nature of an Evidence, which obliges Human Understanding to assent to a thing as true——

Then to evince that an Evidence, of such Conditions as those describ'd, is certainly Obligatory——

Next to shew that God Almighty can never suffer us, to have such Evidence for an Imposture——

And lastly, That there is actually such an Evidence, for the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

This is the Method I have us'd, and let them demonstrate 'tis an ill one.

In

In order to shew my *Management* of this Scheme, to be fundamentally wrong, or to be faulty in some Point of necessary Moment to the Conclusion; it will lie upon them to make out one of these four Points——

Either *First*, That I have not rightly stated the Nature and Conditions of an Evidence, which obliges the Understanding of Mankind to yield its Assent.

Or *Secondly*, That tho those Conditions are rightly stated; yet I have come short in my Proof, of the Obligatory Nature thereof; or have not gone the right way to work, to shew that an Evidence so qualify'd, is obligatory.

Or *Thirdly*, That notwithstanding I have sufficiently prov'd, that an Evidence of those Conditions does infallibly oblige the Understanding of Mankind to yield its assent; yet however, it is not inconsistent with the *Divine Perfections*, to suffer *Impostures* to come recommended to us, with such an Evidence.

Or *Lastly*, That tho the Evidence be truly stated, its Obligatory Nature prov'd, and it be impossible God should ever suffer an *Imposture* to come thus recommended to us; yet that there is a failure in the last Article, and that the Evidence offer'd to prove the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, does not come up to those Conditions.

If they attack the *first* Article, let them give us their Notion of an Obligatory Evidence, fairly and fully stated; and at the same time, be sure to make their Account of it really different from what I have given.

If the *second*, let them shew me the insufficiency of the Principles I have proceeded upon, in order to demonstrate the Obligatory Nature of the Evidence describ'd; as also, what other  
Princi-

Principles I ought to have proceeded upon, instead of those I have actually made use of.

If the *third*, let them give us an Account of *their God Almighty*, that we may know what sort of Being he must be, that can suffer notorious *Delusions and Impostures* to be presented to the Understandings of reasonable Creatures, with such sort of Evidence, for the truth of them.

If the *last*, let them effectually make out one, or both of these Articles——

Either *First*, That the Matters of Fact, on which the Arguments for the *Truth of Christ's Resurrection* are grounded; are not true, but fictitious and imaginary.

Or *Secondly*, That *my Application and Use of them, is wrong*; and that the Evidence arising from them, does not in reality come up to the Conditions and Qualifications requir'd in our Scheme.

And here the way lies very plain and open before them: for I having summ'd up all those Conditions *separately and distinctly*, it will be an easy matter to find out a gross Blunder, provided I have made any in the Application.

Thus I have done all, that I think can be fairly expected or requir'd, in order to the settling this great Point between *Us* and *Them*. I have propos'd the Method of Proof on our side; and I have shewn them all the possible ways of overturning it: and it is not without a very clear Prospect of the utmost Issue and Result of all their Attempts, that I have done this.

In the mean time, let us see, *what follows from the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection thus establish'd.*

## General Corollary.

*All those Consequences which are drawn, in the First Part of this Discourse, relating to the Divine Mission, Dignity and Office of Christ Jesus, to the Truth of the Gospel Revelation, the Happiness of sincere Christians, and the Dangers to which Unbelievers are expos'd ; and which were drawn upon Supposition, that the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection was true : These Consequences (I say) are now no longer Suppositions ; but Propositions, or Theorems of infallible Truth.*

We can say now assuredly —

*That Christ Jesus was a Divine Person ; the great Prophet, Messenger and Son of God ; the only Saviour and Mediator between God and Sinners ; an authoriz'd Legislator, and Revealer of the Divine Will and Purposes to the World ; and who by the Father's Appointment and Constitution, is the Sovereign Judge of all.*

That his Gospel is actually a Revelation of the Mind and Pleasure of God, for the Instruction and Government of Mankind, in order to their Eternal Salvation ; and ought accordingly to be receiv'd and depended upon, as the great Rule of Faith and Practice, wherever it is promulg'd.

That Contempt of this Revelation, is a direct Contempt of God himself ; and Rebellion against the express Orders of Heaven, by which the Authority of it is establish'd.

That the Case of wilful obstinate Unbelievers, is infinitely hazardous ; and of such as continue impenitent to the last (in spite of all the merciful Calls of the Gospel, and the Provision made for their rational Satisfaction and Conviction, in order to their Cure) for all that we can know of the matter, is forlorn and desperate : the Threat-

nings of the Gospel, being delivered in the most plain and peremptory Terms, and God having given us no manner of ground to believe or hope for any Relaxation of them, or that he has provided any other Remedy, than that which he has here reveal'd, *viz. By Faith in Christ Jesus, and sincere Obedience to his Laws.*

That the *Deists* therefore, must necessarily represent themselves, as Persons given up to Humour and Prejudice, and resolv'd not to think nor examine things to the bottom, but pass their Days here in the World, in a *blind mechanical Repose*; till they take this matter into deep and serious Consideration; and setting themselves to reason upon it, as Men should and may do; come, by the Help of God's Grace (which will certainly assist sincerely industrious, humble, and honest Minds) to this good Conclusion, *viz. That they ought to believe and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that their Happiness in another Life, depends upon their so doing.*

And may they all come, to make this Conclusion!

May they know *Christ Jesus*, as the Son of God; and as their Lord and Saviour: *Having their Hearts warm'd with his Love, and their Mouths open'd, to shew forth his Praise.*

For every hard Speech and unworthy Thought of him, let them feel the deepest Sorrow and Compunction of Soul; even that godly Sorrow, *which works Repentance to Salvation, never to be repented of.*

May the Blood of *Jesus* be their Atonement; and through him, let them offer up to God, *that Sacrifice of a broken and contrite Heart, which he will not despise.*

May the Gospel be honour'd, by their Faith and Obedience; and the rest of the unbelieving World



World led on to *Jesus Christ*, by their happy Example.

And when their Conversion has made Joy both in Heaven and on Earth; and they have tasted liberally, the blessed Fruits of the Faith of the Gospel, in solid Vertue, Peace and Comfort here; may they reach the Perfection of all, in the Heavenly Kingdom, where *Jesus Christ who died and rose again*, now sits at the right Hand of God, and has prepar'd Entertainments for those that love him, *such as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive, what and how great they are.*

And this is what all good *Christians* will say *Amen* to.

## S E C T. LXXIII.

**B**UT there are some other Inferences, from this Doctrine of our Saviour's *Resurrection*; which relating to the *Christians* only, I thought proper to subjoin here by themselves. Nor could I omit mentioning of them, without a very faulty Neglect; since they make so much for the solid Comfort of those who sincerely believe the Gospel.

The Uses which such may make of this great Article of the *Christian Faith*; are many and very considerable.

From hence they may assure themselves, of *Pardon and Justification* before God.

For *Christ* was deliver'd for our Offences, and rais'd again for our Justification.

And, *Him* hath God exalted with his right Hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to *Israel*, and Forgiveness of Sins. Again —

This is a sure and never-failing Foundation, upon which they may safely bottom all their Faith and Hope.

*He* (says the Apostle *Peter*, speaking of our Lord) *was verily fore-ordain'd before the Foundation of the World, but was manifest in these last Times for you; who by him do believe in God, that rais'd him from the Dead, and gave him Glory; that your Faith and Hope might be in God.*

And the same Apostle tells us, in another part of his Divine Epistle, that *We are begotten again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead; to an Inheritance, incorruptible, undefil'd, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in the Heavens for us.*

Our Lord's *Resurrection* is likewise set forth in Holy Writ, as the Pattern, or Example of our Deliverance from the Power of Sin, and leading a new and holy Life.

*Therefore* (says the Apostle *Paul*) *are we buried with him by Baptism into Death; that like as Christ was rais'd up from the Dead, by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life.* And again——

*Knowing that Christ being rais'd from the Dead, dieth no more (Death hath no more Dominion over him)——Likewise reckon ye also your selves to be dead indeed unto Sin; but alive unto God, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And from hence the Practice of Holiness and Mortification is immediately press'd and enforc'd.——*Let not Sin therefore reign in your Mortal Body, that you should obey it in the Lusts thereof; neither yield ye your Members as Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin: But yield your selves unto God, as those that are alive from the Dead; and your Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God.*

And

And the Apostle makes use of the same sort of Argument, to persuade *Christians* not only to a righteous and holy, but a more generous, pure and exalted *Conversation*; to a Temper that should raise them beyond this Sphere of earthly things, and dispose them to seek all their Pleasures and Felicities above. — *If ye be then Risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God: Set your Affections on things above, not on things on the Earth: For ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Christ in God.*

So that we see, all the *Graces*, the *Enjoyments*, the *Duties* and *Offices* of the *Christian Life*; are deriv'd from hence (I mean the *Resurrection* of our blessed Saviour) as their native and genuine Spring.

## S E C T. LXXIV.

**B**UT there is yet another Use to be made of this Doctrine; which tho it relates to the *Body*, the vilest and most ignoble Part of us, is not for that reason to be despis'd; but on the other hand, highly to be priz'd and valu'd, by every true *Christian*: And that is this, *viz. That the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a certain and undoubted Pledg, to all sincere Believers, of their own Resurrection to a glorious Immortality.*

*For now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First-Fruits of them that slept.* Which Expression of the *First-Fruits*, intimates a particular Connection, between the *Resurrection of Christ*, and that, of those who believe on him: It represents both the one and the other, but as *Parts of the same great Design*, or the Beginning and End of the same Work: The *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, being

the first leading Step, towards that Universal Triumph over Death and the Grave; which our *Resurrection* will, in due time, render perfect and compleat.

For as in *Adam* all die, even so in *Christ* shall all be made alive; but every *Man* in his own order: *Christ* the First-Fruits, afterward they that are *Christ's* at his Coming.

And the Apostle is so very clear and express, in arguing the Certainty of our *Resurrection*, from that of our Saviour's; that he puts it upon us, if we believe the one, to depend upon the other as certain also. For if we believe (says he) that *Jesus* died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in *Jesus*, will God bring with him. Nay, he does not only directly inter one from the other, but he argues *per impossibile*, the Nullity of *Christ's Resurrection*, and the Falsity of the whole Gospel-Revelation, from the *Hypothesis* of our not being rais'd; and consequently, leaves that *Hypothesis* expos'd, as an infinitely false and absurd one. For if the Dead rise not, then is not *Christ* rais'd. And if *Christ* be not rais'd, your Faith is vain, you are yet in your Sins: Then they also which are fallen asleep in *Christ*, are perished: Yea, and we are found false Witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he rais'd up *Christ*; whom he rais'd not up, if so be that the Dead rise not.

'Tis observable, that the Apostle repeats this Argument, *per impossibile*, three or four times in that Chapter; and to be sure, it was not by chance, nor to no purpose, that he does so.

It might have been thought a sufficient Security to us, to have been assur'd, that because *Christ* was risen, we should rise also, in our proper Order and Season. But 'tis much more still, to have the Point carry'd thus, viz. that *Christ* himself

is not risen, nor his Gospel! true, if it be so, that we rise not from the Dead. This does not make it only a fair Consequence, that we shall rise again, but a plain Impossibility that we should not.

All the Arguments, that serve to prove the *Resurrection of Christ*, and the Truth of the Gospel-Revelation, and which we know to be of infallible Truth, and Certainty; are thus by Consequence made Arguments, to infer the Certainty of our *Resurrection*.

So that this Privilege is establish'd on so sure a foot, to all that believe the Gospel of *Christ Jesus*; that it can never become doubtful to them, till they come to question all the Principles and Foundations of their Faith.

## S E C T. LXXV.

**N**OW this Doctrine of a *Future Resurrection*, is of the greatest Use and Service to us, upon many important Accounts.

For from hence we may derive ———

First, *The best Supports, under the Prospect and Apprehensions of Death.*

Secondly, *The best Reasons, to endure all the Calamities of Life, with Patience and Fortitude.*

And, Thirdly, *The most powerful Motives to Diligence and Perseverance, in all the Duties enjoin'd by our Holy Religion.*

For the *First*, What tho after a few Days more, we leave the Light of this World, and go down into the gloomy Mansions of Death! What tho we cease from Action and Business here; are laid out of Sight and Remembrance, and our Bodies turn to Dust and Rottenness?



This is indeed a Melancholy Scene to Flesh and Blood ; and 'tis the more affecting too, because we know 'tis what we can't possibly avoid, and a few Turns more in the World, will bring us to it.

However, a *Christian* may view, even this dark and dismal Scene, with Comfort.

For tho Soul and Body must part, yet *the Separation is but for a Season*; and that in order to a more happy Union, such as shall never be dissolv'd.

The Grave is not to be our Everlasting Prison : And the Time will come, when *Death it self shall be swallowed up in Victory*.

And what can have more Influence, to alleviate those Agonies, which the Prospect of an approaching Dissolution, may throw weak Flesh and Blood into; than to consider, that this is but a Step to Eternal Life and Liberty? That this Gate once pass'd, we are for ever out of the Reach of all Danger and Trouble; and enter'd upon a State, where Death shall have no Power, nor the Terrors of the Grave ever fright us any more?

On the other hand, How sad and painful a thing must it be, to die without these Hopes! I mean, to die in a State of absolute Infidelity: For a true *Christian* may go off (and many do, no doubt) without the Comfort of those Hopes, which their own sincere Faith in *Christ Jesus*, might entitle them to. But what I say, is, that it must needs be doleful, for a Man to die with sceptical Fears and Doubts, about Futurity, and the Consequences of the Separation of Soul and Body! When he does not know what he shall be next, or where he shall go, or how he shall be dispos'd of: Whether *Annihilated*, or *Metamorphos'd*, or condemn'd to wander in Eternal Night (a dark unknown some-where, worried with restless Thoughts, and  
without

without prospect of Release. And therefore, that those Persons who believe and obey the Gospel of *Christ Jesus*, are infinitely happy; in that they have so sure a Bottom and Foundation for chearful Hope, at their going out of this World; by the many repeated Assurances of a future joyful Re-union of Soul and Body, and a glorious Immortality consequent thereupon.

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## S E C T. LXXVI.

Secondly, **A***S to all the Miseries and Calamities of Human Life*; this Doctrine serves mightily to encourage us, and to fortify our Patience and Resolution in the enduring of them.

We find by Experience, that in all sorts of Trouble and Distress, nothing is so grateful and refreshing to us, as a Prospect of After-Ease and Deliverance. When a Man looks round him, and sees nothing but Calamity on every side, and no appearance of Help or comfortable Retreat; no likelihood of the End of his Troubles, or that things will be better with him in time to come: This tends either quite to damp the Force and Vigour of the Spirits, or to introduce Phrensy and wild Despair. And either way, it renders a Man wholly incapable, of a just and regular Management of himself, under his Affliction.

But to have *Hope* in Misery, and much more a Prospect of certain escape from all, in due time: How does this strengthen and invigorate every Power, and excite us to do all that is possible, to throw off the Burden from us, or to keep our selves from sinking under it?

And

And if so, What Comfort then may true *Christians* draw, from the believing foresight of a blessed Resurrection, and all the joyful Consequences of it?

Alas! Our greatest worldly Deliverances, are but from some particular Troubles and Misfortunes, which as soon as remov'd, may return again; or be succeeded by others, as bad or worse. And if it be not so, yet all the Joy and Pleasure resulting from such Deliverances, are but for a little time: They are gone with the fleeting Vapour of Life, almost as soon as we begin to perceive and relish them.

But here we have *Universal* Freedom and Felicity before us! A perfect Exemption from all Evil, sweetned by *Eternity*, and join'd with *positive* Happiness (which a *Resurrection* will let us into) fit to be describ'd, only in that Heaven, where it shall be enjoy'd!

Now I say, here is a Scene of things so transcendently Glorious and Beautiful, presented to our View, that were our *Faith* but such as it ought to be, no Melancholy or Despondency whatsoever, would be able to interrupt our Peace and Quiet.

## S E C T. LXXVII.

**B**UT it may be worth while to descend to particular Instances, *And shew the Use of this Doctrine, as it serves for our Support and Comfort, under the most ordinary Trials of Human Life.*

First therefore, *Suppose we are oppress'd with bodily Pains and Diseases, which deprive us of the Pleasure*  
and

and Contentment of Life: 'Tis no small Relief (in such a Case as this) to think, that the *very Principles of all these Disorders*, shall be left behind us in the Grave.

That hereafter we shall put off *Mortality and Corruption*, and exchange a drooping frail Constitution, for *immortal Strength and Vigour*. At present, 'tis a vast deal of Art and Attendance, that is requisite, to keep those *tender Machines*, we carry about with us, in any tolerable good Order. How many Methods do we use to compose and settle them, under the painful Sensations they are here liable to? What Recruits are we oblig'd to lay in, for their daily Expences and Decays? And when a Disorder happens, what troublesom Applications, what costly Experiments are made, before 'tis remov'd, and the labouring Springs of Nature are restor'd to free Action again? And after all, how often is the best Art in the World non-plus'd and baffl'd, and miserable we, with all Helps and Remedies about us, are left groaning under our Burdens.

But notwithstanding, there is a never-failing Cure in view, which will at once carry off all these Maladies, and prevent their Return for ever. At Death, we may bid farewell to all Infirmities: *For our outward Man, tho sown in Weakness, shall be rais'd in Power; tho sown in Dishonour, it shall be rais'd in Glory*. Bodies will hereafter be prepar'd for us, most exquisitely wrought and temper'd, by the wise and powerful Hand of God; compos'd on purpose for the noble Service, and fit to share the Joys of a State of Immortality: Free from all the Impurities and baser Mixtures of this Terrestrial Composition, and temper'd into a Fineness for the Heavenly World; where nothing gross and corruptible can dwell.

And

And with what Ease and Pleasure, shall we then feel our selves, when besides the compleat Cure wrought upon our *Souls*, our *Bodies* shall be so admirably dispos'd too? When all the reproachful Marks which Sin hath imprinted on them, being utterly effac'd; they shall be form'd into a Resemblance to the *Glorious Body of our Lord*? *Who will change our vile Bodies, that they may be fashion'd like to his own Glorious Body, by the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* And therefore, let us look upon them, under all their present Disorders; with a *Patience and Constancy*, becoming the *Expectation of so blessed a Change*. And when they clog and discompose our Minds, and hinder us from a free and chearful Discharge of our Duty; let it be a Relief to us, to think of the Joys of a *Resurrection Day*, which are secur'd to us by the Promise of our blessed Saviour.

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## S E C T. LXXVIII.

Secondly, **S**uppose we meet with Disasters and Troubles, abroad in the World, whether Losses and Disappointments, or unjust Violence and Oppression, or Calumny and Reproach: of all which the World generally affords no little Plenty to those, who will approve themselves the sincere Disciples of the *Holy and Blessed Jesus*.

We ought to consider with our selves, in such Cases as these, *That this troublesome Condition of the World without us, is sutable enough to the present unsettled and divided State, that we our selves are in here below.*

Our *Bodies* are in poor and miserable Circumstances; quickly discompos'd and put out of Tune;  
full



full of the Seeds of Distempers, and wearing every Day towards a Dissolution.

*The Peace of our Minds*, is frequently disturb'd, by *irregular Passions and Affections*; by the Dulness and Heaviness of the distemper'd Machine; by cloudy Vapours, and a thousand other malignant Influences of the Corporeal Part; with which the Mind it self is affected, *by virtue of the Laws of the Union*. 'Tis seldom that we have a *serene and truly pleasant* Enjoyment of our selves, that lasts long; some Care or Labour, some Anxiety or Disquietude, in the Circle of Life, breaking in upon us to interrupt it.

We seldom keep to a Pitch, either in our *Temper*, our *Apprehensions*, or *Relish* of things. And whether things about us, change or no; we can be *foolishly Happy and Miserable*, by mere Conceit and Imagination. We often *betray our selves*, into the greatest Dangers, by our Folly and Imprudence, or Rashness and Obstinacy: So that the worst Enemies we have, *can't do us that Mischief, which sad and common Experience assures us, 'tis in our Power to do our selves*.

Now I say, 'tis no great matter whether all things go on smoothly and easily abroad, since Affairs are in so ill a Posture at home. For our own *vitiating Constitution*, would be always a Fountain of Trouble and Uneasiness to us. If we could make the World go just as we would have it; yet unless a perfect Cure were likewise wrought upon our selves, all the Pleasure arising from thence would be *sadly imbitter'd to us*. Besides, such a State of perfect Quiet, and freedom from all external Trouble, might be of very dangerous Consequence to us, with respect to the next World; how much soever it might please and gratify us in this. For we find that very great Crosses and Afflictions,

tions, are sometimes hardly sufficient, to keep Men in the way of their Duty: And that they can make hard Shifts, to tread forbidden Ground, tho every Step be amongst Thorns. What would it then be, if there were nothing to give a check to Sin and Extravagance, or to put us in mind of our Duty and Danger? What would it be if the World did nothing but smile and tempt, and our way was all Pleasure and Softness? So that all these things well consider'd, we may easily convince our selves, *That there is no need of a State of more Rest and Quiet than this is, for us, such as we now are, to enjoy our selves, that little time we have to stay here.*

But then on the other hand, *So glorious a Change as will one Day be wrought in us, is a full Assurance (even to our Reason) of a proportional Change of all Circumstances without us.* God who will hereafter join pure and spotless Minds, to exactly temper'd and harmoniz'd Bodies; will make us enjoy the Comfort of so advantageous a Union, in a Life of perfect Pleasure and Tranquillity.

'Tis a surprizing Work to raise Human Nature, from its present mean and frail Condition, to a State of glorious and perfect Health. And therefore God, who will do that Work, will undoubtedly fute all things so, that all the Ends and Purposes of it shall be obtain'd. He will not make us capable of perfect Felicity, without bestowing perfect Felicity upon us. And this is certain, *That no Joys within, can make a Happiness perfect, which is liable to Assault and Disturbance from without.* And therefore, in that World to which a Resurrection will introduce us, *there will be no Enemies to oppress, nor no disastrous Events to make us uneasy, and take off from our Enjoyments.* These are the proper Trials of this World,  
where

where Sin and Corruption live, which necessarily produce Trouble and Sorrow, and render them also very useful to us. But when our Natures are refin'd from all that base Allay, and the Work of God is compleated both in Soul and Body; there will be no room for any Discipline or Exercise of this sort. Trouble and Confusion would be more disagreeable to such a State, than perfect Rest and Liberty to this.

Now 'tis a Motive, *to invincible Courage and Resolution in bearing all the Evils we meet with in this World;* to consider there is such a State before us, in which we shall be out of the reach of all, and enjoy an everlasting undisturb'd Repose. That in a few Days more, when Death shall come to give us a Discharge from hence, we may say, of all things troublefom and afflictive here, as the *Israelites* of their Enemies, at the brink of the *Red Sea*; we shall see them no more for ever.

## S E C T. LXXIX.

**T**Hirdly and Lastly, *This Doctrine is the most effectual Encouragement to the Exercise of all Grace and Vertue, and the Discharge of every Duty incumbent on us, in our Christian Course.*

'Tis a sufficient Proof of the Truth of this Proposition, *That the Doctrine of the Resurrection is made use of for this Purpose, by the Holy Apostle St. Paul; who knew perfectly well, from what Topicks, Duty and Diligence ought to be press'd upon us.* For after he has infer'd our certain Victory over Death, by Steps of clear and undeniable Evidence; and represented the Triumphs of that Glorious Day, in which we shall put on *Immortality and Incorruption*:

tion : He gives a most pathetick Exhortation, to Zeal and Constancy in God's Service ; and plainly enforces it from that very Consideration of the *Resurrection*, and the blessed Consequences of it. *Therefore (my beloved Brethren) be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know that your Labour in the Lord, shall not be in vain.*

I think 'tis evident, beyond all possibility of just and rational Question, that the Apostle does here make use of the Doctrine of a future *Resurrection*, as an Argument to godly Diligence and Perseverance, in the Duties of a *Christian Life*. And indeed, in the nature of the thing it self, *the Promise and Prospect of a Glorious Reward hereafter*, is a most powerful Incitement to Piety and Obedience. So far, that without the *former*, I cannot see, but we should want our main and greatest Encouragement (as rational Creatures) to the *latter*. I hope I shall not be misunderstood : I speak here of the pure abstracted Duties of Christianity, as distinct from all those of the *Natural Law*. For I have expressly shewn already, Part I. SECT. X. that our Obligations to all the Duties of *Morality and Natural Religion*, would continue fix'd and unshaken, if all Views of future Happiness and Immortality were taken away from us. And the Grounds upon which I have proceeded, to establish that Doctrine, I am very secure, are such, as can never be questionable to any, but those Persons only, who believe that God Almighty in making Man, made a Creature, under *no Moral Relations nor Obligations* to himself, but left at full Liberty, to range and rove up and down the World, in which he plac'd him, as wild and thoughtless, as the very Brutes themselves.

But



But as to the Rules and Duties of the *Christian Religion*, as such ; I think 'tis a very clear Case ; *That our main Encouragement to the Practice of them, were utterly lost, if we had no Prospect of future Rewards.*

And the reason is, because (as we have shewn, Part I. SECT. IX, XII, XIII, XIV, XV.) these Duties are plainly calculated for a future State ; the very Scope and Drift of them, is to prepare us for such a Happiness as the Gospel reveals. That is, this is the *ultimate*, the *grand* Scope and Design of the *Christian Institution* ; *how improving soever it may be to Human Nature, or beneficial to Society*, in other respects. And indeed, if we do but compare the Description given in the *New Testament*, of the Heavenly State ; with that sort of Life and Temper, which the Rules and Precepts of the Gospel, tend to bring Men unto in this World ; we shall easily be convinc'd of the Truth of this. We shall find, *that Heaven is but the Perfection of our Christianity* ; tho such a Perfection as we cannot now comprehend.

*Purity, Tranquillity and Love, chearful Service of God, and delightful Zeal in doing his Will*, are the Beauties of the present *Christian Life*, as well as of that glorious one which is to come. These are the Essentials of both States, how much soever they differ in Circumstances and Degrees.

Here indeed our Devotion is mix'd with Infirmary, and our Enjoyments allay'd by many necessary Trials of *Christian Vertue* ; which the World above knows nothing of. However, when we live and act as *Christians* should do, 'tis plain by all the Accounts we have in the Gospel, that we then begin that sort of Life, which, when freed from all Mixtures of Sin and Sorrow, will constitute the Heaven we look for.



## S E C T. LXXX.

**A**ND therefore now I say, *If a future blessed Life, be the Perfection of our Christian Graces; if the Tendency of all these Duties be thitherwards, and the Practice of them be so direct and proper a means to prepare us for that Felicity, and so peculiarly adapted to that Design, as it evidently is:*

Then if that main and great End be taken away; of what Value are the Means, whose Direction is to, and whose Center is in that End? And what Motives or Encouragements, have we to put us on to apply our selves to the Use of them? That very Supposition, which takes away the End it self; takes away all their *fitness and usefulness* to us, and therefore consequently, all our *Springs of Desire and Endeavour*, to put them into practice. Whereas, do but lay down a State of future Rewards as sure and certain; and then we have (both as *Men and Christians*) the highest Encouragements imaginable, to a constant, careful and zealous Discharge, of all the most sublime and abstracted Duties which the Gospel enjoins us.

## S E C T. LXXXI.

**I** Am afraid, *this Doctrine will seem too Legal and Mercenary, to some good Christians, who can't digest Discourses of this kind, so easily as they may some others contain'd in this Treatise.*

They'll

They'll be apt to think, here's more regard had to *our own Felicity and Advantage*, and less to the *Glory of God*; than what the noble and generous Spirit of the Gospel allows of. For I confess, I have intimated very plainly and freely, *That I firmly believe, we ought to have an Eye to the Reward, in all our Christian Duty and Service; and are not oblig'd to proceed, upon any sublime abstracted Views, of the Glory of God, without the Consideration of our own Felicity*: And therefore, *That we should lose our main Encouragements to the Practice of the Duties of Christianity, if the hopes of a future Reward were taken away*.

And I must needs say, that as long as I consider *Human Nature*, and *Divine Revelation*, in a just regard to each other; I have no Prospect of ever coming to any other Scheme of Thoughts. It seems to me, to be so unavoidable and necessary, from the joint Consideration of *these two*; that I can't forbear thinking, those that are in the contrary Opinion, do forget either the one or the other, in the Conclusions they draw, towards the maintaining of *their own Scheme*.

And if after all, they will still go on, to decry such a Practice as this, as *base, mercenary, and un-evangelical*; they must do so: For there is no Remedy against a licentious Humour, of calling things by wrong Names, or of branding them with infamous ones, when they do not please People, or are not agreeable to a Set of Notions they have entertain'd.

I shall not be guilty of painting out the Opinion I oppose, in any hateful and invidious Colours: but leaving the Patrons of it to their Liberty of exposing all Parties who differ from them; *as People under the Bondage and servile Spirit of the Law, and wholly unacquainted with the Ease and Free-*

*dom of a Gospel State* ; I shall offer them some good Reasons, why they ought to do otherwise, and leave the Result of all to themselves.

And *First* of all, As for *Scripture-Authority* (for I am now speaking to such, whose Principles make it no begging of the Question, to make use of this Argument) I shall confine my self to that Passage of the Apostle *St. Paul*, before-mention'd : For what plenty foever there be, of very plain and positive Texts to this purpose, in the *New Testament* besides ; yet I shall keep to this one, as being sufficient, and that which relates the most immediately to my present Business and Design.

*Wherefore* (or ὡς, so that) *my beloved Brethren*, be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the *Work of the Lord*, forasmuch as ye know (or knowing, εἰδότες) that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.

If these Words were not dropt by Chance (and sure we can't think the Pen of an Apostle to be so impertinently luxuriant) then there is some Argument and Design in them.

And if there be so, then the Question is, what the Apostle's Scope and Design in these Words is ; or to what End and Purpose it is, that he uses them here ? 'Tis a plain Case, that here is a Duty (and a very important one too) recommended, viz. *Diligence and Perseverance in the Works of Piety and Religion*. And every Man that is not wilfully blind, may see, that there is a Motive, or an Inducement made use of, to stir *Christians* up to the Performance of this Duty.

And this Motive is evidently *the Prospect of a future Reward* ; which is as easy to be seen, as the very Words of the Text themselves.

For to be assur'd, that our Labour shall not be in vain ; is to be assur'd, that it shall be rewarded.

And

And to be urg'd to Duty, from this Consideration, that our *Labour shall not be in vain*; is to be urg'd to Duty, from the *Prospect of a future Reward*; and to be encourag'd to abound in God's Service for that very Reason, and from that Principle:

And therefore, for the Apostle to express himself after such a manner, as he does in this place, is manifestly, *to press Duty from this Consideration, that our Labour shall be rewarded*; and thereby to authorize and warrant the Practice of *Christians* in having an eye thereto, not only as lawful, but also as truly *spiritual and evangelical* too. Nor do I believe it possible for any Person fairly to avoid this Conclusion, without falling foul upon Grammar and good Sense, and losing the Respect owing to a divinely inspir'd Writer.

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## S E C T. LXXXII.

Secondly, **B***R all the Discoveries we have, of the infinitely merciful and gracious Nature of God, we are sure, that he has join'd his own Glory and our Good together; and thereby made it a positive Duty, incumbent on us, to direct our Aims to the one as well as the other.*

All his Institutions are calculated and contriv'd, for the promoting of our Felicity. He does not command Duty, out of pure Sovereignty, or merely for Duties sake; but to train us up by a course of Holy Service and Obedience, for the Fruitions and Employments of a happy Life hereafter; that we may shew forth the Praises of his Divine adorable Perfections, with those exalted Powers and Capacities, we shall then be endow'd

with. And this, God out of his gracious Condescension, is pleas'd to look upon as our *glorifying of him*, and does accordingly set it forth to us in Scripture as such; nor is it possible in the nature of the thing, that we, or all created Nature besides, can glorify God any other way, or in any other sense than this.

And therefore, rightly to aim at our own Felicity, in the use of those Means which he has appointed us; is to aim at his Glory, since that is the great End of all our Happiness; and every Joy and Perfection we arrive at in Heaven, speaks the Praises of him, who brought us thither.

'Tis scarce to be believ'd, that any Person that has a Notion of the Gospel, should have such gross Conceptions of Heaven, as to look on it only as a Place of Ease and Pleasure to himself; without any Views of Praise and Glory to that God, from whose immense and unmerited Goodness all his Happiness flows. This would be to make worse than a *Mahometan* Paradise, of the *Christian* Heaven, and to think of Happiness in so sottish and stupid a manner, and so little agreeable to the Nature of Man, which is sensible and tender, and spreads into Love and Gratitude, for Benefits receiv'd; that I say, 'tis not to be imagin'd, that any Person who knows any thing of *Christianity*, can ever frame such a slavish irregular Notion of the Happiness it promises. So that when such Persons talk at any time of *Eyeing the Reward*, it's scarce Humanity, but for certain it's far from *Christian* Charity, to suppose them to abstract intirely from the Consideration of God's Glory, and to intend nothing but their own Advantage and Felicity in what they do. On the other hand, all that understand the Gospel in its genuine Simplicity, with-



without the forc'd Interpretations and deceitful Glosses, which Men put upon it to bring it to speak the Sense of their own Schemes and Systems; do constantly profess to believe, that the Glory of God is the *ultimate* End of all their godly Endeavours, Attainments and Enjoyments, whether on Earth or in Heaven; but that their own Happiness and Benefit is likewise an End, tho a *subordinate* one, which they are to have a regard to: and that as God has inseparably connected these two with each other, so they serve and please him, by pursuing them both in conjunction; and cannot more effectually aim and design to glorify God, than by aiming and designing to obtain his Grace, and prepare themselves for future Happiness, in and by the use of those means, which he has appointed, and *expressly commanded* them to use for that End.

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## S E C T. LXXXIII.

**B**UT, Thirdly, *Those Persons who call it base and mercenary, to act from the Hopes of a future Reward; seem to me, quite to forget the Temper and Constitution of Human Nature, and to set the Gospel and That at variance with each other.*

For God, as the Author of Nature, has undoubtedly implanted that Affection of *Hope*, in our Breasts; to serve us for very excellent Ends and Purposes.

'Tis this which puts Life and Sweetness into every thing, and is the great Spring of all Action and Endeavour. If any valuable Good be set before us, which we are put into a fair way of attaining, and our Minds are touch'd with a lively

Sense of the Excellency and Agreeableness of it to us; *this Principle* is naturally rous'd and set a-work, and influences all the Powers of our inward and outward Man, into proper and suitable Motions. And to say, that in such a Case as this, we do not eye and respect that Good, and are not prompted to do our utmost, and encounter all Difficulties that lie in the way, from the Hopes we have of obtaining it; is to give the Lye to our own Constitution, which plainly tells us, that we do do so. We are all conscious to our selves, *That our Warmth and Inclination to vigorous Action, does in all Cases rise and fall, in proportion to our just and rational Hopes*: And on the other hand, that nothing so effectually chills all our Faculties, and induces a remiss and careless Disposition of Mind, which ends in a total neglect of the Use of Means; as the loss of Hope does. And if this be our *Constitution as Men*, I am sure it is not overturn'd or alter'd by *Christianity*. The Grace of God which makes us new Creatures, does not do it in this sense, to divest us of the Passions and Inclinations of Human Nature. But whatever happy change be wrought upon us, in correcting the Vices and Distempers of our Faculties; they themselves are preserv'd intire in their several Natures and Tendencies to their proper Objects. *The same Springs of Motion and Action* continue in us as before, and must therefore work as before; only after a more regular manner, and to more noble Ends and Purposes.

And therefore, when our Minds are duly enlightned and convinc'd, by the salutary Operations of the Divine Spirit; so that we see the superlative Excellency of the heavenly Rewards, propos'd to us in the Gospel, to be obtain'd in  
the

the way of a *patient Continuance in good Works*: To say that the hope of this, should not influence us to Zeal and Perseverance in the discharge of our Duty; is to say that we should throw off Human Nature, and own our selves to be Creatures of a different Species from what we were before our Conversion. For as long as we continue to be Men, and are in the way towards the Enjoyment of any Good, which we have just and pleasing Apprehensions of; because we hope, and hope reasonably, therefore we are inspir'd with Resolutions to use all necessary means to come to the possession of it. And this is the certain and necessary Result, of that innate desire after our own Good and Felicity, which we can no more divest our selves of, than we can divide our selves from our selves, or put off our very Essence. Let any Man consult his own Constitution, and see if he does not find it so.

From hence therefore we may argue: If it be thus, with respect to all the inferior Good this World affords us, can it be otherwise, *when the highest Good our Natures are capable of, is set before us*? Can the hope of some trifling Enjoyment here, engage all our Diligence and Care? And when the Object comes to be as great as Heaven, and charming as the Pleasures of an immortal Life, and these duly represented and believ'd by us; can our Hope then only be a languid feeble Affection, and not able to do what it does in other Cases? By what Laws should Human Nature exert it self so vigorously in one Case, upon poor and despicable Motives; and forbear to do so in another, when the Motives to Action are heightned beyond all possible Comparison? This is to make it below even a piece of Clockwork, which will mend its Pace with a bigger Weight.

## S E C T. LXXXIV.

**F**ROM hence therefore I conclude, *That that Religion which is cry'd up for so much Purity and Spirituality, upon pretence of abstracting from all Encouragements to Duty, given by a Promise of future Rewards; is not only contrary to the Gospel, which does both enjoin and commend it, but also to the very Constitution, and most essential Laws of Human Nature.*

That it is absolutely impracticable, whilst we continue Men, and before it can obtain amongst us, we must be taken to pieces and set together after a different manner from what we now are. And therefore, that those Persons who pretend to act in this manner, do by some Inadvertencies to the bent of Human Nature in themselves, or by some false Arguings, impose upon their own Weakness, and by degrees manage themselves into a Persuasion, *That they perform Duty without respect to a Reward, when indeed there is no such matter.* And how far a Set of wrong Notions, or inveterate Prejudices, or ill Management of Reason and Religion both, may contribute to Peoples forming a wrong Notion, even of what they do themselves; common Experience will shew those who converse much with Mankind.

## S E C T. LXXXV.

**B**UT Fourthly and Lastly, *This Doctrine is besides attended with dangerous Consequences.*

For to cry up that for pure evangelical Piety, in which Men take no Encouragement to Duty, from

from the Hope of the Reward, which the Gospel promises; and to run down all the rest as the Effect of a *legal, mercenary, and slavish Temper*: This has a plain tendency to introduce a Neglect and Disregard of Duty, or at least to abate our Zeal and Resolution in the Performance. And tho I don't charge all the ill Consequences that follow from these Notions, upon those who entertain them; yet I say, several very bad ones do follow fairly from them, nor is there any thing but what is sufficiently plain, necessary to the Proof of it. For in that weak and degenerate State into which Mankind is fallen, there's need of all the Motives that can be to confirm us in our Love of God and Goodness. And he therefore who made us, and knows both our natural and contracted Infirmities, has mercifully join'd his own Glory and our Felicity together; made Religion our Interest as well as our Duty, and order'd it so, *that in the way of answering the great Ends of our Creation* (which are to set forth his Praises) we should also secure an Everlasting Happiness to our selves. And since he has join'd both these together, 'tis certain, *that infinite Wisdom saw just Reasons for so doing.*

'Tis to no purpose, to dispute of what God might have done, in the way of absolute Power and Sovereignty. He might have made a Race of Creatures only to have serv'd him, without advancing their own Happiness, and this without the least Wrong or Injustice. But 'tis infinitely more agreeable to that *immense, rich, and diffusive Goodness* we adore in him, to render his Creatures happy by their Duty and Obedience. And 'tis Matter of Fact, that God has actually dispos'd things so, that our Obedience is the way  
to



to our Happiness; and consequently, *has made the latter a powerful Motive to the former.*

And as this is most worthy of infinite Mercy and Goodness, and most agreeable to Human Nature in general, as thus made and constituted; so 'tis especially most agreeable to the present imperfect and deprav'd State of Mankind, in which after all the Reparations made by the Grace of God, our Measures of Goodness are too little and weak to allow us to act upon so sublime a Principle, as *that of God's Glory abstracted from our own Felicity.* That would require another Constitution, and other Circumstances than what we dare pretend to. For those who act with all sincere Zeal and Care, from both these Principles in conjunction, find Temptation enough, to render it extremely difficult, to hold on in the way of their Duty notwithstanding.

And therefore, to take away the one of these Motives; that is, *the Consideration of our own Felicity*; besides contradicting *the Divine Appointment and the Constitution of Human Nature* (in both which they are firmly united) is so far to take us off from the Performance of Duty, as the loss of a most powerful and engaging Motive can be suppos'd to do. And if this be not to take a considerable step towards the total Neglect of it, I leave all the World to judge. And when Men are once come to a Neglect of their Duty, 'tis no wide step from thence to Immorality and Profaneness. Which tho' I believe not design'd by many that advance these Notions, is yet the genuine Result and Consequence of them.

*And thus I have briefly propos'd, the chief Uses to be made, of this great Doctrine of our Saviour's*

Saviour's Resurrection; and of our own Resurrection, as it follows from his.

The Resurrection of the Body is indeed a very sublime and mysterious Subject; and 'tis for that very Reason (no doubt) that the sceptical Humour of some People, puts them on, to pry so very nicely and curiously into it.

Men love to be busy about things that are beyond them, instead of bestowing their Pains usefully upon such Matters as are within their reach. I speak this of those Persons, that seem to triumph in the Unaccountableness of the *Resurrection* of the Body, from pure *physical* Principles; and insult *Christianity* with their little Queries upon that Head: *How are the Dead rais'd; and with what Body do they come?* For my part I think, the fittest Answer to be return'd to them, is that which the Apostle *Paul* gave to the Fools of his time, that ask'd the same Question: *Thou Fool! That which thou sowest, is not quickned except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that Body which shall be — But God giveth it a Body, as it pleaseth him.*

I think this is all that need be said in the Case. 'Tis enough to me, that infinite Wisdom and Power have undertaken to accomplish the Work. I am not solicitous about the Way or *Modus*, in which it shall be brought to pass; but rest contented with the Assurance given me, *that the thing it self shall be.* For *he is faithful* that hath promis'd; God hath said it shall be so, and he is true, and able to make his Word good. And upon this Foundation, and this alone, I defy all the Objections, that *Wit* or *Philosophy* can make to the contrary. The Credibility of the *thing*, depends upon the Credibility of the *Revelation*.

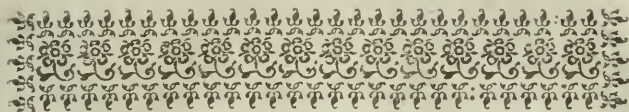
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If the *New Testament*, which plainly reveals this Doctrine, be a *Divine Book*; then I have all the Satisfaction I need in the matter. After all the *Transmutations*, and *Revolutions* possible to happen to a System of Matter, in this sublunary World; yet the Business is still within the Reach of Omnipotence: and he that first set the System together, can do it again, after infinitely more Separations and Changes, than our shallow Intellectuals can ever form a Notion of. And what if our Bodies are in a State of *continual Flux and Alteration*, so that they are (*physically speaking*) no Day nor Hour, the same that they were before? That God, to whose Power, Wisdom, and Faithfulness, we entirely leave the Work of a *Resurrection*, we are sure, will order the matter so; that it shall be truly and properly said, that *This* and *That*, and the other Person, by Name, who were once dead, are now reviv'd and rais'd again. No matter what the *Identity* is, or in what sense the rais'd Body may be said to be the same.

*Philosophy* has nothing to do here, and our *unbelieving* Criticks know so little of the common Works of God in the World, that they may well enough quit all Pretences to explain those that are miraculous and extraordinary.

*Present Nature* will afford them Matter enough for their Enquiries; and they need not look so far as the *Day of Judgment*, for a Problem that shall have Difficulty enough to puzzle them.

F I N I S.



## REFERENCES to some Passages quoted in the fore- going Treatise.

**H**AVING observ'd that in some few Places, I have neglected mentioning, *what Page* in an Author, the Passage I quote, is to be found in (which is what I all along propos'd to my self to do, as making most for the Ease and Satisfaction of the Reader) I was willing to bestow a Page or two (which I hope the Reader will think not ill bestow'd) here at the End of the Book, for the supplying that defect.

Pag. 234. That Passage of *Tertullian*, is pag. 240. Edit. Colon. Agrip. 1617.

Page 261. Place in *Eusebius*, is pag. 94. of Cap. Lib. & Edit. antea citat.

Page 262. *Arnob.* Lib. 2. Cont. Gent. pag. 52. Edit. Par. 1605.

Page 274. *Just. Mart.* Apol. 1. pag. 50. Ὁρῶν δὲ ἀφ' οὗτος πρὸς θάνατον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα νομιζόμενα φοβεῖσθαι, ἐνεχόντων ἀδύναστον εἶναι ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φιληδονίᾳ ὑπαρῆχεν αὐτοῖς· τίς γὰρ φιλήδονος, &c. Edit. Par. 1636.

Page 315. *Just. Mart.* pag. 265. Lib. & Edit. citat.

Page 322. *Just. Mart.* pag. 345. Lib. & Edit. citat.

—Ibid.

— Ibid. *Euseb.* pag. 218. Lib. citat.

Page 356. *Euseb.* pag. 512. Lib. citat.

— Ibid. *August.* Epist. citat. pag. 7. Tom. 2.  
Edit. Par. 1635.

And St. *Austin* himself, Epist. 5. ad *Marcell.* even laughs at that pretended Comparison of *Apuleius* and *Apollonius*, with *Jesus Christ* — *Quis autem vel risu dignum, non putet, quod Apollonium, Apuleium, ceterosq; Magicarum artium peritissimos, conferre Christo, vel etiam præferre conantur !* pag. 11.

Upon this account, *Arnobius* challenges the Enemies of *Christianity*, to produce but any one in the whole Heathen World, that ever did by the help of all those Arts, but the thousandth part of what our Saviour did — *Potestis aliquem nobis designare, ex omnibus illis Magis, qui unquam fuere per secula, consimile aliquid Christo, millesima ex parte qui fecerit ?* Lib. 1. pag. 31. Edit. citat.

— Ibid. *Tertul.* Apol. Cap. 21. pag. 37. Edit. citat. — *En omnia* (viz. concerning the Miracles, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of *Christ Jesus*, before mention'd) *Pilatus & ipse pro sua Conscientia Christianus Cæsari tunc Tiberio nuntiavit.*

And Apol. Cap. 5. pag. 23. — *Tiberius, cujus tempore nomen Christianum in seculum introiuit, annuntiata sibi, ex Syria, Palæstina, qua veritatem illius divinitatis revelaverant ; retulit ad Senatum, cum prerogativa suffragii sui : Senatus, quia non ipse probaverat, respuit. Cæsar in sententia mansit, comminatus Periculum accusatoribus Christianorum.*

These Accounts the aforesaid Father appeals to, with as much assurance, as he does to those, concerning the *Miraculous Eclipse* at the Passion of our Saviour ; which wonderful Phenomenon, he tells them (Apol. Cap. 21. pag. 37. Edit. citat.)



tat.) they had recorded in *their own Archives*: And this is very probable; since the *preternatural Darkness*, as also the *Convulsions of the Earth* at that time, are particularly taken notice of by *Phlegon* in his *Chronicle* (as *Origen* tells us) in the 13th or 14th Book (of the same) Περὶ δὲ τῆς Τίβερος Καίσαρος ἐκλείψεως, ἔ βασιλεύοντος καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔοικεν ἐσαυρώσθαι, καὶ ὡς τὰς μεγάλων τότε γηومύων σεισμῶν καὶ γῆς, ἀνέσχετο καὶ φλέγων ἐν τῇ τετρακιδεκάτῳ ὅμιλῳ τῶν Χρονικῶν. Orig. Lib. 2. Contr. Cels. pag. 80. Edit. Cantab. 1677.

*Eusebius* also, as well as *Origen*, repeats the said Testimony of *Phlegon*, in his *Chronicon*; An. 2040. And *Scaliger*, in his Annotations upon the same, besides the concurrent Testimonies of profane Authors, as to the Business of the *Earthquakes*; shews there were Medals struck in *Tiberius's* Time, that confirm'd it.

The *Acts of Pilate*, are directly quoted and appeal'd to, by *Justin Martyr*, Apol. 2. pag. 84. Edit. citat. — Θεραπεύειν πάσας νόσους ὁ ἡμέτερος Χριστὸς περὶ ἐψηλόθη. ὅτι δὲ ταῦτα ἐποίησεν ἐκ τῆς Ποντίας Πιλάτου γηομύων μαθεῖν δύνασθε. And so again. expressly, pag. 76. of the same *Apology*. And it seems but a very poor way of answering so plain and publick a Testimony of Fact, to say, that *Justin* was too credulous in this Case; as he is suppos'd to be, in that of the *Sybilla Cumana*. All that I shall say to that matter, is, that he tells us in his *Cohortatio ad Græcos*, that he was there in the Country, saw the Place with his own Eyes, and had his Informations concerning the *Sybil*, from the Inhabitants, amongst whom the Account had pass'd as an unquestionable Truth, from Generation to Generation. And I can't see, what more can be requir'd or expected of any Person, who gives any sort of Narration; in order to

his being protected from ill Treatment, and the scurrilous Charge of Credulity. Besides, if he was mistaken in his Opinion of this *Sybil*, he had several very antient Writers to bear him Company in the Mistake; and amongst the rest no less a Person than his Master *Plato*, who, as he makes out in the same place, had quite another Opinion of the *Sybil*, than some of the Moderns have. And I never heard this celebrated *Grecian Philosopher*, reflected upon, for his Credulity in this Case: But now I remember; *Plato* was a *Heathen*, and *Justin* a *Christian*, and an Apologist for *Christianity*, and a most invincible one too; and this (with some People) is ground enough, for a partial Severity towards him. However, as the Learned Dr. *Grabe* observes, in his Annotations upon this Passage of *Justin* (it being a Work also which he himself had intended) the Learned *Gerardus Joannes Vossius* has vindicated this excellent Father from all those frivolous Criticisms, *Lib. 1. Cap. 13. de Historicis Græcis*.

As for those *false and spurious Acts of Pilate*, we have an Account of them in *Epiphanius*, De Quartadecimanis, Hæres. 50. *Lib. 2. Tom. 1. Edit. Par. 1622.*

And *Eusebius* tells us, that even the Children were made to learn them by heart, and repeated them in the Schools every Day: "Οἱ τε παῖδες ἀνατὰ διδασκαλεία, Ἰησοῦν καὶ Πιλάτον τὰ καὶ ἐφ' ὕβρις πλανηθέντα ὑπομνήματα, διὰ σώματι καὶ πᾶσαν ἔφερον ἡμέραν. *Hist. Eccles. Lib. 9. Ch. 7.* But at Ch. 5. of the same Book, he gives a more ample and particular Account of that matter. Πλατύθυροι δὲ τα Πιλάτου καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ὑπομνήματα, πάσις ἔμπλεα καὶ τοῖς Χριστοῦ βλασφημίας, &c. "Having feign'd certain Records, concerning *Pilate* and our Saviour, full of all manner

“ manner of Blasphemy against *Christ*; by the  
 “ Command of the Governour, they were dis-  
 “ pers’d into all the Territory under his Juris-  
 “ diction; ordering by Letters, that they should  
 “ be made publick to all Persons in every Place,  
 “ as well in the Country as Cities; and that  
 “ School-masters should take care to teach them  
 “ to their Boys, and make them get them by  
 “ heart, instead of other Learning.” [Τὰς τε

παισὶ τὰς γράμμασι διδασκᾶν ἀπὸ μαθημάτων ταῦτα με-  
 λετᾶν, καὶ διὰ μνήμης κατέχειν παραδίδοναι.] And then  
 he goes on, and gives an account of some abo-  
 minable Practices, of forcing certain profligate  
 abandon’d Wretches, by threatnings of Tor-  
 ment, to own themselves *Christians*, and to ac-  
 cuse themselves as guilty of whatever Crimes  
 the Managers should think fit to dictate to them.  
 Now as to what *Eusebius* says, of these *Acta Pi-  
 lati*; was he credulous too? Was he mistaken?  
 Was he impos’d upon in his Accounts? What  
 an odd Coincidence ’tis, that *Justin Martyr*, and  
*He*, and *Epiphanius*, should all happen to be out,  
 in a Case of so notorious a nature, and so very  
 likely to be true as this was, viz. That a Roman  
 (Governour, or, if you will, a) *Procurator* should  
 give an Account to the Emperor and the Senate, of  
 things so very extraordinary (and that happen’d in  
 his own Province too) as the Life and Actions of  
 such a Person as *Jesus Christ*; whom *Pilate* knew  
 personally, had seen at his Tribunal, and condemn’d  
 to Death at the earnest Request of the Jewish Na-  
 tion; and was upon the Spot, when the surprizing  
 News of his Resurrection first came abroad, and be-  
 gan to spread thro’ the World: In short, if these  
 Accounts are authentick and good (and I believe  
 there’s no body will scarce pretend to a decisive  
 Proof to the contrary) the Enemies of *Christia-*

nity have fully quitted Scores, and are at least even with the *Christians*, for whatever Frauds some People (how justly, I shall not now determine) surmise and conjecture, they have been guilty of, in concealing or suppressing what some of their smarter Adversaries have objected against them. Those Practices for certain, are infinitely hateful, and they could scarce be good *Christians* (I think) that were guilty of them; and whatever good Designs they might pretend, they were (if those Alledgments are true) the greatest Enemies to *Christianity*; in that they open'd the Mouths of its Enemies, and represented it as if it were not Proof against any, or all possible Objections that could be made, and reflected upon the invincible Evidence it carries along with it self, by attempting to support it by such base and degrading Artifices.







A N

## A P P E N D I X,

Containing a DISSERTATION ON  
that QUESTION,

*Whether Consciousness and Thought,  
can be the Result of mere Matter and  
Motion.*

*With some REFLECTIONS, concerning the  
Nature of God, of Human Souls, and  
the Universe in General.*

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By HUMPHRY DITTON.

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## S E C T. I.



AS one Truth naturally infers, and leads  
to another; so likewise does one Er-  
ror or Absurdity, tend to usher in  
and make way for another: inso-  
much, that we often see Men are  
drawn in to espouse such Notions and Opinions,  
as at first they never intended nor thought of;

E e 3

merely



merely in consequence of some *Hypothesis* they have already advanc'd, and which must be defended, whatever Inconveniencés it runs them upon.

Having first set out with *one wrong Principle* (I mean wrong in it self, whether they argue upon the matter, and know it to be wrong, or not) they find that in order to the making of that good, they must necessarily have recourse to *another*, and from thence to a *third*, and so on; till they have drawn out a long Chain of wretched Notions and Hypotheses, each Link of which, has notwithstanding, a certain and regular Dependance, upon that which goes before, and that which comes after.

I make no question, but that idle Notion of *Matter's Thinking*, which has been so industriously propagated by our *Modern Deists*; is in reality no other, than one of the Links of such a Chain.

For suppose we were to begin with the Notion of a *Future State*.

This is certainly a very disagreeable one to Men, who by being entirely at their own dispose in this World, have made it their Interest, that there should be no World to come; and do therefore undoubtedly, passionately desire there may not be any such State; and take as much pains to persuade themselves that there is not: Tho I am apt to believe, they do for the most part strive to very little purpose.

To overturn (therefore) this ungrateful Scheme, according to which it is not only possible, but very probable, that Men may be punish'd in *another State*, for their irregular Conduct and Behaviour in this; the *first Step* must be, to deny, that the *Soul exists separately from the Body*.

And

And because this can't be done with any tolerable shew of Reason, while it stands granted and allow'd, that the Soul and Body are *two distinct Substances*; therefore you must of course *take away all specifical and essential Distinction, between it and the Body*, and make the whole of Man of a piece. So that as the one part, *viz.* that which is called *Body*, is evidently nothing but a Machine, or mere System of Matter; so likewise the other, *viz.* that which is call'd *Mind*, *must be made the same kind of Substance too.*

But because 'tis impossible that this should be, unless *both* have the same essential Powers and Properties; therefore you must likewise invest them *both* with the same Properties and Attributes.

And from hence the next Step is plain, *viz.* *That Matter must be asserted to be a Thinking Substance*; capable of *Joy, Desire, Argumentation, and Reflection*, with whatever else is commonly attributed to a Soul.

But then because the Actions of the Mind imply *Vigour and Liveliness*, which the mere Parts of Matter, consider'd in themselves, promise nothing of; therefore, you must suppose them to be *briskly mov'd* and agitated: then a System of them may become a Soul, and be capable of performing all those Actions of Thinking Substances, which are comprehended under the general Names of *Thought* and *Volition*.

And now there is no danger of a *Future State*, nor no room for the Talk of Heaven and Hell! For tho' Matter dispos'd in a *Regular System*, may think and reflect; yet at Death, when the whole System it self is put into the utmost Confusion; to be sure, there is an end of all Thought and Reflection. So that the Joys and Miseries

of an After-State, if they are not all of them impossible in the very nature of the thing; yet at best, they are but the Fictions and Inventions of a Set of Unphilosophical Priests, who know not the *Powers of Matter and Motion*, and how Thought and Reason depend upon them; but tell People these Tales of a Life to come, only to over-awe and frighten them, and by that means to have an Opportunity of doing whatever they please with them, in the present Life.

Here now is a Scheme, each step of which naturally leads to another. Nor can a Man well take one of them, without being tempted to go through all the rest. Let him begin, with making *Matter and Motion think*; and he shall end, with making *the Gospel an Imposture*. Or let him lay down this for his first Principle, *That the Christian Religion is a Cheat*; and he will miss his way very strangely, if he does not come to this Conclusion at last, *That Matter is a Thinking Substance*.

Nor are we to imagine, that the modern *Deists* have cultivated and set about this Notion of *Matter's Thinking*, with any other Design or View, than that of undermining the very Foundations of *Christianity*. They are sensible, that the *Christian Religion* is not to be *directly and immediately* attack'd, with any Prospect of Success; but there might be something done by *remote and covert Methods*; such as that of broaching *Hypotheses*, which under a seeming *Philosophical Disguise*, should do all the fatal Execution, which naked Arguments could never accomplish. And such a one is that, which we are now considering. It looks like a mere piece of Philosophick Theory, and as if 'twere calculated only to solve the wonderful Phenomena of *Human Nature*: To shew us upon clear and intelligible Principles, what 'tis

'tis to *understand*, to *will*, and to *remember*; without being oblig'd to have recourse to such canting Terms, as *Soul*, *Immaterial Substance*, and the like; which carry as little Sense and Meaning along with them, as *Aristotle's ἐντελέχεια*, or *Occult Qualities*.

But what assistance this *Hypothesis* can afford us, towards the Solution of those *Mysterious Problems* of *Human Nature*; we shall see by and by. We shall see how consistently, with the Principles of *True Philosophy*, these Gentlemen can shew us how we may *perceive*, *argue* and *reflect* upon things, by the help of their *Matter and Motion*. In the mean time, I shall only say thus much; That I am well satisfy'd, this *Hypothesis* never yet did, nor never will do any harm; by the *Philosophy* it carries along with it. And that I know of nothing that can be so great a Temptation to a Man to doubt, whether it may not be true, or no; as to consider, that some People have been capable of believing it. For if any way of thinking at all, could ever possibly be the effect of *pure Mechanism*; so sluggish and irregular a one as this, bids as fair for being so, as any whatsoever.

## S E C T. II.

**B**UT after all, to speak my Mind freely in the Case, I must needs say, I look upon all this Talk, of *Matter and Motion's Thinking*, to be mere *Banter* and *Pageantry*; and not the effect of any real Opinion or Belief, in the major part of them, that set up for the Defence of it. I am afraid, 'tis no Breach of Charity to believe, that



that the reason why they advance it, is not so much because they conclude it to be *true*; as because they find it *fit and convenient* to serve a Turn.

'Tis true indeed (as we have observ'd already) the Notion it self, is in one *Sense* a regular and consequential step enough; and follows very fairly, from some other Principles laid down. But then, 'tis one thing to maintain a Notion, *in relation to a Scheme* that requires it; and another thing, to do it, *upon the score of the clear Evidence of Truth*, which it carries along with it; by which the Understanding is fully convinc'd, and compel'd to give its assent thereto. And the reason, why I cannot defend my self from believing, that the Understandings of our *Deists* are not laid under very strong Convictions of the truth of this *Hypothesis*, is, because it is really so very vain and ridiculous a one, that it is not to be imagin'd, that Men of good Sense and Learning (as many of these Gentlemen are) and those such profess'd Enemies to all Bigotry and Credulity, and that rally others so freely as they do, for a slight and perfunctory Examination of the Matters of their Belief; should ever be serious in the Defence of such a System as this is. Indeed, People that are train'd up in *Superstition and Implicit Faith*, and are taught from their very Cradles, to believe every thing that is told them by the Guides of their Souls, tho' ever so repugnant to common Sense and Reason; these may by virtue of such mighty Prejudices, possibly bring themselves by degrees, to believe very odd and extravagant things, tho' otherwise they be Persons of Sagacity and good Understanding, and such as would be very able to find out their own Mistakes, did they but allow themselves the



the Liberty of arguing upon them. But this is not the Case of the Gentlemen we are now talking of. For as it was never any Rule amongst them, to believe as any Church or Party believes, or to shape their own Notions and Opinions, by the Model of other People's; so they have always set up for quite another sort of Management; as appears by the laudable Titles of *Rationalists*, *Free-Thinkers*, and others of that sort, which they have dignify'd themselves withal. And tho they'll not allow the *Christians* to take any such rational Courses; yet it has ever been (as they tell us) a Maxim amongst themselves, *to admit nothing as true, but what is evidently and manifestly prov'd to be so, upon Principles of indisputable Force and Authority.*

Now I say, to see Men of such a Character, Men so fond of Truth, so strict and rigorous in their Enquiries after it, and so nice and cautious in giving their Assent; to see these stand in the Defence of so *very obnoxious* an *Hypothesis* as this is; is enough to make a Man question, whether they are or can be, in good earnest or no. However, I leave that matter to themselves; and if I am out in my surmise, I crave their Excuse for't: but 'tis plain, they give a handle to the Mistake, if it be one. In the mean time, these Gentlemen themselves think it no breach of Charity to suspect, that some Persons of a certain Church (who stand in it, *That a Bit of dry Bread is real Flesh and Blood*, and are so positive and hot in the matter, that they would sacrifice all the World about them, that won't belye all the Senses and Faculties of Human Nature, in saying as they say: that these People) do indeed know better things, and are much wiser, than they would be taken to be, *in that respect.* And  
when

when a Man shall come and tell me, that a Portion of sluggish *Matter*, in which (by all the *Observations*, and *Experiments* I can make of it) I can find no more *Signs of Thought and Counsel*, than I can of *Flesh and Blood*, in a Consecrated Wafer; that this Lump (I say) *reasons*, and *makes Syllogisms*, and has such sort of Faculties as Mankind have: I must confess, I can't forbear telling my self, that this Man *acts a Part*, and talks of things that he no more believes, than those Gentlemen do, who assure me, that what I conclude to be mere Bread, by its *Colour, Taste, Smell, Specifick Gravity*, and all possible Methods of Trial, is, for all that, no more *Bread*, than it is *Iron, or Gold*, or any other Substance in the World. I don't say, that the Contradiction is so *palpably and notorious gross*, in one Case, as in the other: but I say, I should think a Man to be as much *in Jest*, in one Case, as in the other; because in either Case, he tells me, what no Man in his right Wits can believe.

And really, the *very Language* of this *Hypothesis*, is almost as offensive as that of *Transubstantiation* it self.

It shocks a Man, to hear *Understanding* coupled, with *Round and Square*; and *Thoughts* talk'd of, in such a sort of Stile, as the *Geometricians* do, of their Lines and Figures. I can no more imagine, how *Prudence and Sagacity* can be the Result of a Whirlpool of Fluid Matter; or *Temper and Disposition*, the mere Effect of some Motion, propagated in such or such *Directions*; than I can conceive how *Accidents* can exist separately from their *Subjects*, or a Body which my Eyes tell me is confin'd to this or that Place, to be in ten thousand others at the same time. If a Man should tell me, that all the fine Flights in  
Poetry,

Poetry, or the Steps of the most elaborate *Mathematical Demonstrations*, were nothing but the rolling of little Cones or Spheres in the Brain; That this Man was a *Linguist*, the other a *Philosopher*, and a third a *Statesman*, by the mere *Velocity, Size and Figure of Particles*: I should not think he talk'd much more intelligibly than the foremention'd Gentlemen do, upon the Mysteries of the *Wafer*.

There is something so intolerably awkward and disagreeable, so perverse and repugnant, in this sort of *Dialect*; that one would conclude, even from thence (if there were no more) that God and Nature never intended it should be us'd amongst Mankind; and therefore never laid any Foundation for the use of it, by making of us after such a manner as should require it.

It will be objected here perhaps, *That People don't use themselves, to connect and compare these Terms, of Thought, Matter, and Motion together; and that 'tis owing only to that disuse, and the Prejudice arising there-from, that they form Notions of them, as repugnant and inconsistent with one another.* But pray, are there not as many Prejudices, that arise from too much use and familiarity with certain Notions and Phrases; as do from too little use, or a total disuse of them? Don't some Men, by *long Custom and Practice*, bring themselves to believe that such and such things are just and true, which yet in their own nature are far from being so; and they only apprehend them to be so, because they have us'd themselves to go on in such a particular Road and Method of Thinking? If so, why mayn't it as well be a mere Prejudice, on one side; to apprehend a *Sutableness and a Consistency* between the Notions we are speaking of; as it may be on the other,

to

to apprehend an *Unsuitableness* and Repugnancy between them?

For Men to throw all the Prejudice and Prepossession upon their Adversaries, and take none at all to their own Share; is a ridiculous Piece of Vanity, and deserves no other Answer but Silence and Contempt.

However, we shall effectually discover, on which side the Prejudice lies, when we have found out, on which side the Impossibility, and the Absurdity lies. For 'tis certain, that no Man can ever be led, by fair Steps, to an impertinent or impossible Conclusion.

Now we shall easily see where the Absurdity lies, when we have thorowly discuss'd the Question lying before us, *viz. How Matter and Motion can solve or account for the Phenomena of Thought and Consciousness.*

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### S E C T. III.

**T**O prevent all cavilling upon Words and Terms, I desire it may be observ'd, that by *Matter*, I understand what Mankind generally understand by that Term; *viz. A solid Substance, capable of Division, Figure and Motion.*

And when I speak of accounting for the Phenomena of Thought and Perception by *Matter* and *Motion*, I would not be thought to exclude any of the other Properties of it; but suppose them all to be taken into the Account, as far forth as they can conduce, in the Opinion of any Defender of this *Hypothesis*, to the Solution of the Phenomena of *Intelligent Substances.*

Whatever



Whatever Service can be done by *Solidity, Divisibility, Figure and Motion* (all in conjunction) towards a satisfactory Account of these Appearances; let it be done. I mention *Motion* only, not because I leave the others out, but because I include them in the Notion of *Matter*, whose Properties they are. For the same reason likewise, I do not mention, in so many words, *the Effects or Results of the various Compositions of these Properties with one another*: Because they are all included under the *Properties* themselves, from the *Compositions* of which they result. All the possible Compositions and Variations of Figure and Motion, *Ex. Gr.* are and will be for ever, nothing else but Figure and Motion. So that when I enquire, whether *Matter and Motion* can produce Thought; I would be understood to enquire, *Whether what we call Thought in an Intelligent Substance, can be the mere Result of Matter, with any or all of its Properties, or any or all the possible Changes and Combinations of them and their Effects?* And because after all, there may still seem to be room left for Quibbles, founded upon some (pretended) possible, unknown, Powers and Properties of *Matter*, by which it may be able to think and will; as also, upon the Infinite Power of God, who may (as we are told) endow some Systems of *Matter*, with a Power of Thinking, as he himself shall please or think fit: I shall take these Notions into the Question too; and therefore, to render it as full and compleat as may be, shall divide it into these three distinct Parts.

First, *Whether Thinking and Willing, can possibly be the Effect of any, or all the known Properties and Affections of Matter.* I say the known Properties of *Matter*: For I think it well worth my while to enquire into this in the first Place, and that  
very



very particularly too ; because I am sensible that (whatever is or may be pretended, of any possible Effects of *Almighty Power*, and the unknown Properties of *Matter*, yet) the main stress of the Controversy rests here, and here only.

Secondly, I shall consider, what is to be said, with respect to *those possible unknown Qualities and Affections of Matter*, from whence we are told, Thought and Volition may arise ; supposing it to be allow'd, that they cannot proceed from those Affections and Properties, which are known to us.

Thirdly, What is to be said, with respect to that other Notion, *Of God Almighty's endowing some Portions of Matter, with these Faculties of Thinking and Willing.*

## S E C T. IV.

FOR the *First* of these.

It will inevitably follow, that those Actions or Operations of Intelligent Substances, (which are comprehended under the general Name of *Thought*) cannot be the Result of any mere Properties or Affections of Matter, if it be demonstrated, *That such Actions or Operations are absolutely repugnant to, and inconsistent with, those fix'd and establish'd Laws, which Matter in self, with all its Properties and Affections, and in all its Parts and Systems, is evidently subjected to.*

If those Laws will not allow or permit such Effects to come to pass, as must necessarily come to pass, in order to the Production of such Phenomena, as those which we call by the Names of *Reasoning, Reflection, Volition*, and the like ; 'twill  
be

be certain to a Demonstration, That they cannot be the Result of any of the aforesaid Properties or Affections of *Matter*. For no Affection, which is incompatible with the constant and certain Laws a Subject is plac'd under, can ever result from that Subject, or any thing essentially belonging to it.

So that the Point now to be demonstrated, is this, *viz. That the Actions or Operations of Thinking Substances* (or the Phenomena observable in such Substances) *are utterly incompatible with the Laws, to which Matter, with all its known Properties* (that is, a *solid, figur'd, divisible, movable Substance*) *is subjected.*

And this will be abundantly made out, in the following Propositions.

#### P R O P. I.

**T**O ARGUE, or INFER one thing from another, is wholly irreconcilable to, and simply impossible to be effected by any mere Mechanical Laws.

I have occasionally spoken something to this Point already, Part I. SECT. XIV. However, it being so very clear and convincing a Demonstration, of the utter Impossibility of all *Mechanical Thought and Reflection*; I shall pursue it a little more particularly in this Place: Tho I must needs say, the whole Controversy is so perfect a Jest, that I am almost asham'd to talk seriously upon it. But the extravagant Whimies of Mankind have made it necessary. In order to this, therefore, I must premise (what I am sure there can be no difficulty of allowing) *viz. That the same Parts of Matter, cohering together after the same manner, moving in the same Direction, and with the same Impetus or Velocity, in the same Space or System; will continue to produce the very same*

*Effect, whatever that Effect be, which was once produc'd by them.* And therefore, that if Thought and Reflection, in intelligent Substances, be the Result of any sort of Motion or Agitation, of any Pressure or Contranitency of the solid, figur'd, divisible Parts of Matter; it's necessary, that in the Production of *different sorts of Acts, of Thought and Reflection*, if all other Circumstances continue the same, the Circumstance of Motion, should be some way diversify'd, either as to *Velocity*, or *Direction*, or both: And *vice versa*, if in different Acts of Thought and Reflection, the Circumstance of Motion continues unvaried, as to Velocity and Direction; there must needs be some Variation in the other Circumstances.

Because, I say, all things continuing the same, the same Effects in a Case of *mere Mechanism*, must necessarily result; and by consequence, it would be impossible, that there should be any *Variety or Diversity* of Thought and Reflection; which yet in plain Fact and Experience we find there is. This premis'd, the Proposition is thus made out. When I collect or *infer*, one thing from another; I am conscious to my self of two distinct Modes, or Kinds of Cogitation [I do not care by what Name 'tis call'd, provided the thing intended be but allow'd, *viz. a real Diversity in the Mode or Manner of my Cogitation.*] By the one of these I perceive an Assent to the Truth of those Propositions (commonly call'd *Premises*) from whence I am to make what I call an Inference. By the other, I perceive and assent to the Truth of a certain Proposition, resulting from the former, which is call'd the *Conclusion*, or the Inference it self; and becomes the Object or Matter of my Assent, upon the Perception

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tion I have, of the necessary Relation and Connection between it and those Premises, which I had before found to be perfectly *suitable and agreeable to my Reason.*

These Acts, or Modes of Cogitation, wherein I assent to the *Premises*, and to the *Conclusion* drawn from them; are evidently of a *quite different Kind and Nature.* Because in the Conclusion, I perceive the Agreement of *two things* with one another, by the means of the *prior distinct Agreement* of each of those things, to some *third thing*; which third thing is not actually found in the Conclusion, tho it were so in both the Premises.

And therefore I say, there is a quite different Sort or Mode of Cogitation, in these two Cases. Because there is a *real Intrinsic* Difference, between perceiving the *separate Agreement* of two Things with a third Thing; and perceiving the Agreement of those two Things with one another, by the Intervention of that third Thing.

Now then since, according to the present *Hypothesis*, all this is to be deriv'd from the mere *solid, figur'd, divisible, movable Parts of Matter*; it's absolutely necessary, in order to account for this manifest Diversity of Effects, that the said Parts of Matter *should have undergone some Change of State and Circumstance.* For all things continuing in the same state, the same Effects must arise; as was shewn just now; and consequently, there could be no *Conclusion* drawn from the *Premises* laid down.

Now, whatsoever Change of State or Circumstance has been, must of necessity have been, with respect either to the Solidity, the Division, the Figure, or the Motion of the Parts of Matter, or all these together. For we are arguing



now upon the *Known* Properties of Matter; and I presume, these are all that we do know. So that the *Change of State* we look for, must necessarily be found in some, or all of these, if it be found at all: and if not, *then either 'tis not Matter of Fact, that we argue and reason; or if it be, then those Operations are impossible ever to be effected by these Principles.*

Now, I believe, I may take it for granted, that no *Materialist*, whatsoever, will suppose in this Case, any Change in the *Solidity, Cohesion, or Configuration*, of the Parts of Matter; but think a Change, in the Point of *Motion*, sufficient to do the Business. And indeed, I believe, it will be the best way to lay the stress of the Matter there: for besides that all the same Difficulties which press them, in the Supposition of a Change of Motion, will also press them, in the Supposition of a Change of Solidity, Cohesion, or Configuration; there will, as I take it, be some new ones accruing over and above.

Upon which account therefore (whether they are aware of any such Difficulties or no) I'll fix upon the Article of *Motion*; and demonstrate the Impossibility of any *new State*, in that respect, to account for the different Acts, Modes, Sorts, or Kinds of Cogitation, in the Business of *Argumentation*.

It's past all doubt now-a-days, amongst Men of any Taste in *true Philosophy*, That as the Parts of Matter which are at *Rest*, can't exchange that State for the contrary one of *Motion*, unless determin'd thereto, by the Influence of some *external Agent*; so those which are actually determin'd to move in any sort of Direction, will *continue* to move therein, till they are likewise compell'd to exchange that Direction for another,  
into



into which they are put, by *some other Mover from Abroad*: And that the Change of Motion, in such a Case, is always *proportional* to, and propagated in the *same Direction* with the Force impress'd. So that therefore, when any sort of Motion is once commenc'd, amongst the Parts of Matter; if these Laws are true, it can neither be propagated with a *new Impetus*, nor in a *new Direction*, without the Intervention of a *new Mover*, qualify'd in both respects to introduce such an Alteration.

Now, since 'tis plain, that in *Ratiocination* (where I infer one thing from another, and another thing from that Inference, and a third from thence, and so on) there's an Infinity of different Modes of Cogitation; and likewise since these are all, by the *Hypothesis*, but the different States of the (solid, figur'd, divisible) Parts of Matter, with respect to *Velocity and Direction*: therefore 'tis necessary, that they should have been put into these different States, by the Impulse of some foreign Mover. *For they cannot change their own Condition, and throw themselves out of one Motion and Direction into another.*

Let this Mover now be what it will, it must still be Matter; for (by the *Hypothesis*) we have to do with nothing else but Matter. But then, since this Mover is the Cause of Motion elsewhere, it must be mov'd or acted on it self; for otherwise it could not produce a Change of Motion in other contiguous Parts of Matter.

Therefore there must needs be some other *prior* Mover still, according to the foremention'd Laws. And for the same Reason there must be another *prior* to the former, and so on to *Infinity*; and this must be the Case, in every individual Act of Reason and Argumentation: which is

such horrid unphilosophical Nonsense, that it is no more to be endur'd, than the running upon it is possible to be avoided, in bringing *such a Phenomenon* as this, to the Test of the rigorous Laws of Matter and Motion.

And therefore it is beyond all possible rational Doubt true, as the Proposition asserts, *viz. That Inference and Argumentation are wholly inconsistent with, and simply impossible ever to be effected by any mere mechanical Laws.* Q. E. D.

*Schol.* 'Tis plain, that the Matter turns here, upon the Impossibility of a Change of Motion and Direction, in the pure mechanical Production of one Thought from another. This will ever be the invincible Difficulty, and the certain Confutation of that vain Hypothesis. For as long as Matter is subject to such Laws as it is; 'tis certain this can never be. Each new Mode of Thought is a new State of Motion, Cohesion, Figure, or Division; which cannot be effected but by the real Action of some other Matter. And this will inevitably lead us on to an infinite Progression of Agents and Movers; nor is there any stopping at a certain determinate Number, without involving equally great Absurdities, as in running on *ad Infinitum*. Perhaps these Gentlemen may be apt to think otherwise; but if they consider the Matter well, they'll find it to be so.

## P R O P. II.

**T**HE Exercises of WILL, in thinking Substances, conspicuous in an ARBITRARY Suspension, Succession, and Repetition of THOUGHTS; are utterly impossible, in a System of mere Matter and Motion.

I hope there will be no Misunderstanding arising here, from my use of the Term WILL; as being what a *Materialist* (some at least) would perhaps make a very great difficulty of allowing. But (that we may on neither side hide our selves in a Mist of Words) I mean here by WILL nothing but *that Principle or Power in thinking Substances, by which they are enabled, either to do a thing, or to let it alone.* And sure we have such a Power as this: Else all the *Deists, Hobbists, and Materialists* in the World would be of our Opinion, in Matters which now they pretend to dispute with us. For we find they have a Power to chuse and embrace *their own* Notions, and to let ours alone. And tho they may call this by what Name they please; yet Mankind have generally agreed to call it by the Name of WILL; and by that Name I shall also call it, because I know of none, more proper and expressive of our Conceptions in this matter, than this Term is. However, I mean no more by it, than what I have already explain'd; nor can any Man deny it, without *demonstrating the Truth on't, by his very Denial.* So inevitable is the Necessity of running upon flat Contradictions, when Men set up to dispute plain Matter of Fact, in their own Natures and Constitutions.

As for the Proof of the *Proposition*, it follows easily from what was demonstrated in the *Last*. For to SUSPEND a Thought, in this *Hypothesis*, is to put an End to that particular State of Motion, wherein the Being and Exercise of that Thought consisted. To CHANGE or DIVERT, from one to another, is to alter one State of Motion, or another: and to REPEAT the same Thought again, is to bring the Parts of Matter

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into

into the *same Circumstances* of Velocity and Direction, that they were once in, after divers intervening Changes and Interruptions.

Now these Phenomena are absolutely inconsistent with any Laws of mere Mechanism in the Universe.

For as no Motion can be *destroy'd*, without the positive Action of *contrary Movers*, or the Resistance of Impediments: so neither can the Parts of Matter be turn'd from one Direction to another; or, after various Successions and Changes of Motion, ever possibly recover the same State and Circumstances again; unless upon one of these two accounts following.

For either there are *material Agents at hand*, ready determin'd to produce these particular Effects, of such and such Velocities and Directions: Or we must suppose, the mere Parts of Matter, by some *innate or inherent Power*, able to determine themselves to the Production of these Effects. If there be material Agents, ready determin'd to the Production of these Effects; they must needs be determin'd thereunto, by *other Agents or Movers*: and then there is no remedy, but we must run on into an *Infinite Progression*, as before. If they determine themselves, to these Actions; then, *Matter is made a self-moving self-directing Substance*, capable of acting, without being acted upon; which (tho as boldly, as ignorantly and precariously asserted by some modern Philosophasters, yet) at once destroys all, that the World has ever call'd by the name of NATURAL PHILOSOPHY; ever since they have left mere *Cant and Talk* in these matters, for solid *Experiment and Demonstration*. The Consequence therefore is, *That there is nothing in all the known Powers and Affections of Matter, from whence there is any Possibility of deducing those*



*those Instances of Arbitrary and Voluntary Determination, that shifting and changing, those strange and sudden Returns, Reflections, and Transitions in Thought; which by Experience we find 'tis in our power to make. And therefore, I rightly conclude, that these Phenomena are utterly impossible ever to be, in a System of mere Matter and Motion. Q. E. D.*

*Schol.* That MATTER IS NOT A SELF-MOVING SUBSTANCE, is without many words, thus palpably evident.

If Matter has a Power of Self-Motion, then 'tis either according to some one particular and determinate Direction.

Or else, Equally to all Directions in general.

Or else, To such and such Directions alone, as shall be determin'd, by its own innate Judgment and Choice, as most proper and convenient for it to move in, upon any Emergency that happens.

If its Power of Self-motion were only according to some one determinate Direction; then, most certainly, it would never move in any other but that. But now our Senses testify to us, that Matter moves in an infinite Number of various and different Directions. And therefore, the first Hypothesis is false.

Again, a Power to move in any or all Directions in general, is to be absolutely indifferent and undetermin'd as to any: which is to have no Power of Self-motion at all; because a Power of Moving every way equally and alike, is a Power of Moving no way; that is, a Power of not Moving: which makes the second Hypothesis an absolute Contradiction.

Lastly, That the Self-moving Power of Matter does not respect certain Directions, upon set Counsel and Choice, according to particular Emergencies



gencies and Occasions; is demonstrable upon these two accounts.

*First*, That in *Fact*, Matter does ever obey this Universal Rule, of accommodating it self to the Motion and Direction of the Mover; and not to the Requirements of any particular Occasion or Emergency.

*Secondly*, That in an infinite number of Cases, 'tis plain, either that Matter does not act from Judgment and Choice at all; or else, *that God has endow'd it with a Power of Judging and Chusing, only that, which is worse and most inconvenient for it self*: and this amounts in Consequence to as much as the former.

Now for this reason I affirm, that Matter is not, nor cannot possibly be a self-moving Substance: and let any of our *Materialists*, who have, without any face of Proof, as confidently affirm'd that it is, shew me wherein the Argument I have made use of, is in any respect defective.

### P R O P. III.

**A** Power of SENSATION or PERCEPTION of Objects, is never to be accounted for, by any Pressure or Endeavour, any Action, Reaction or Resistance, of the Corporeal Organ.

This is directly contrary to Mr. *Hobbs's* Doctrine, as we find it in his *Leviathan*, and his *Physicks* too.

*Phantasma* (says he) *est sentiendi actus.*

And that we may know what this *Phantasma* is, he philosophizes upon the matter, and gives us this account of the Nature and Production of it: *Ex quo intelligitur, sensationis immediatam causam esse in eo, QUOD SENSIONIS ORGANUM PRIMUM*

*MUM TANGIT ET PREMIT.* Si enim Organi pars extrema prematur; illa cadente, premetur quoque pars quæ versus interiora illi proxima est; & ita propagatur pressio, sive motus ille, per partes Organi omnes, usque ad intimam. This is the External Cause or Origin of the Phantasma; as for the Internal and more immediate one, he describes it thus: *Quoniam autem motui ab objecto, per media, ad Organi partem intimam propagato, sit ALIQUA TOTIUS ORGANI RESISTENTIA SIVE REACTIO, per motum ipsius Organi internum naturalem; sit propterea conatus ab Objecto, conatus ab Organo contrarius: Ut cum conatus ille ad intima, ultimus actus sit eorum qui sunt in actu sensationis; tum demum, EX EA REACTIONE aliquandiu durante, IPSUM EXISTIT PHANTASMA; quod propter conatum versus externa, semper videtur tanquam aliquid situm extra Organum.* [Hobbs de Sensatione & Motu Animalium.]

And he does the same again in his *Leviathan*, Cap. 1. where he talks of the Counterpressure or Resistance of the *Heart*, to the continu'd Motion, propagated from external Objects; which Reaction or Conatus tending *ad extra*, appears it self to be (*aliquid externum*) something without us, and so (according to this *Hypothesis*) constitutes our Sensation or Perception of those Objects.

This is his Account of the matter. And indeed those that read his *Phænomena Naturæ*, will scarce find any one considerable *Phænomenon* there, solv'd more intelligibly or philosophically, than this of *Sensation*: So unlucky a Hand had he, at solving *Physical*, as well as *Mathematical* Problems.

Nor have any of the rest of the modern *Materialists*, been more fortunate than he, in their Explications of *Nature*. A remarkable Instance of which, we have in Monsieur *Des Cartes*, who  
tho

tho a most skilful and excellent *Mathematician*, has yet done little else, than carry'd on one continu'd Chain of Blunder and Paralogism, thorow his whole *Principia*; and but little better neither, in his *Traſtatus de Homine*. But as fondly as that Philosophy of his has been hugg'd and receiv'd in the World, I make little doubt, but the subtle Author intended it either as a *pure Romantick* Entertainment (and ſo has horribly impos'd upon his ſerious Admirers) or as a Foundation for ſomething worſe.

But this by the by: Our Buſineſs now is to ſhew, how far ſhort all the Mechanical Action and Reaction of Matter, comes of a genuine Explication of the *Phenomenon* of Perception.

The truth of it is; it is no Solution, no Explication of the Matter at all; but leaves it ſtill, in all reſpects, as much in the dark as ever.

*A Motion or Preſſure propagated from an Object, produces a Counter-Preſſure or Reaction in my Organ.* True! But what's this to the Buſineſs of Perception? *How does this pushing outwards, tend to make me conſcious, knowing, or apprehenſive of this Object?* 'Twere to be wiſh'd, that ſome of Mr. *Hobbs's* Followers would explain this matter a little. For without this, they had as good ſay nothing; becauſe they don't come up to the Caſe, nor ſpeak to the main point in hand. How is this reciprocal Agitation of an *Eye* or an *Ear*, my Apprehenſion of the thing ſeen or heard? I can eaſily conceive what a Man means, when he tells me of *Reaction*: but when he tells me, that that mere Endeavour of the Parts of the material Organ *ad extra*, is my perceiving of a thing; he leaves me utterly ignorant of what Perception is: *becauſe I can find no Similitude nor Relation, between mere Vibrations or Undulations of*  
*ſome*

*some fine Threads or Fibrille in the Machine, and that Acquaintance which I have with an Object, in what I call an Act of Perception.*

And I should understand him every whit as well, if he told me, that *Motion* was Green or Blue, or *Sound* Triangular or Square; as that *Sensation* is Reaction, and *Consciousness of an Object* the mere *Conatus* of the trembling Organ towards it.

But then that which (I take it) does most effectually shew the Vanity and Falsity of this Hypothesis, is this, *viz. That the Reaction of the material Organ, can never possibly account for that Perception, which we have of Objects, as specifically different from each other.*

For the Act of Perception being (according to this Hypothesis) the mere Reaction of the *Sensory*; 'tis most evident, that our different Sensations of Objects must be deriv'd from the different Reactions of the *Sensory*. And consequently, in whatsoever respects the *latter* may be different, in the same respects, and those only, can the *former* be so.

Now the Differences to be consider'd in the Reaction of the Organ, can be only these: Either, *First*, the *Repercussion* is *stronger or weaker*, according as the *Pulse* propagated from the Object is stronger or weaker: Or, *Secondly*, *More or Fewer* Parts of the Organ do react, according as more or fewer in *Quantity* and *Extent* are impress'd by the Object: Or, *Lastly*, there may be a difference in respect of *Position* and *Situation*; so that sometimes *these*, and sometimes *the other* Parts of the *Sensory*, are put into this state of Reaction, according to the *Shape* and *Figure* of the Object which is presented.

Now let us consider these distinctly. ———  
By a more *vigorous and forcible* Reaction of the  
Sensory,



Sensory, I can only have a *stronger and more lively* Sensation of an Object.

By the Reaction of *more Parts* of the Organ, I can only perceive the Object to be *greater or more extended*.

By the Reaction of *differently posited* Parts of the Organ, I can (at most) only perceive a difference of *Shape or Figure* in the Object.

But suppose now, there were presented to me two Objects of *two different sorts* of Matter, but *exactly equal* in Bulk, and *similar* in Figure. 'Tis certain in Fact, that I do perceive the one of these to be vastly different from the other. And yet 'tis demonstrable, that the Reactions of the Sensory, produc'd by both of them, must be *exactly the same*, with respect both to *Position and Extent*.

If therefore there be not a Difference arising from the other Cause (*viz.* that of the *Strength and Force* of the Vibrations) such as is capable of answering that Apprehension I have of these two Objects, as *specifically* different from one another; then 'tis demonstrable, that this Hypothesis of Sensation is false.

Now there can be no Difference arising from *that other Cause*, capable of doing this: and that for this evident Reason, *viz.* Because the Act of Sensation being (in this Hypothesis) the *Phantasia*, or Reaction of the Sensory; *a more violent Reaction, can be no more than a more brisk and vigorous Perception*: It can but make me perceive the *same* Object *more strongly and forcibly*; but it can never possibly make me perceive, that *This* Object is really different from *That*; or, that *This* is not *That*, but something of quite another Nature and Kind.

And therefore since 'tis Fact, that I do perceive this Difference, and that *in the very Act of Sensation*



*tion it self*, while the Object strikes the Sensory, and by that means produces my Perception of it; it's plain, that this *Hobbian* Hypothesis is infinitely false and wrong. *Q. E. D.*

*Schol. 1.* It is not by any concomitant *Act of Ratiocination*, that we come to be appriz'd of the Differences of the common Objects of Sense; but we find them to be different *in and by the pure Act of Sensation it self*.

We have *in and by* this very Act, such a Representation of things made to us, that we apprehend *this is not that*, nor *one the other*.

'Tis true, that by *Reason and Reflection*, we come to a more compleat and particular Knowledge of the Agreements and Differences of Things; but we have not our *first* Apprehensions of those Agreements and Differences, from thence. 'Tis not by *Reason*, that I know this *Cube* is *Stone*, and that *Wood*, and the other *Lead*; but 'tis by *Sensation*, or *Perception*; whatever it be, that I call so: Let that be what it will, I find, that I am thereby appriz'd of the Differences of things; and am conscious also, that *this Act* is not of the same nature with that which I call by the name of *Reasoning, Arguing, or Collecting one thing from another*.

So that there is no *possible Salvo* to be made for this Hypothesis, by pretending that 'tis *Reason*, and not *pure Sensation*, that ought to give us an account of that Difference of Objects we are speaking of.

And my Design in adding this *Scholium*, was partly to shew, that there is *plain Matter of Fact in Human Nature*, to confront those, that should pretend to evade the Force of the Argument this way.

*Schol.*

*Schöl. 2.* Our Perception of Colours will serve admirably well to illustrate this Argument. That the Rays of Light are *originally tinctur'd*, or (as we call it) colour'd, *Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue*; and that Bodies appear of such and such Colours to us, accordingly as they do more copiously reverberate this or that particular sort of *Colour'd Light* to our Eyes; is now a Point that no body calls in question, since the noble Discoveries of the *best Philosopher of the Age*, relating to this matter, have been made publick.

But whatsoever *intrinsic and essential* Difference there be in the Beams of Light; and how variously soever they *affect and strike* the Organ of Vision; yet there can be no possible account of our Perception of their *different Colouredness*, from the Mechanism of Reaction (nor indeed from any other Mechanism whatsoever.) For were the Parts of *differently colour'd Lights*, of ever so different *Magnitudes or Figures*, or reflected from Bodies upon the Organ with ever so different a Force; yet all that could be *Mechanically* effected from hence, would be, that the vibratory Reactions of the Sensory, would be *quicker or slower, stronger or feebler*, perform'd by *fewer or more Fibrille* in conjunction; or something reducible to the one or the other of these. And the utmost Result of all this, with respect to the matter of *Sensation*, cou'd be only thus much; that *we shou'd perceive one Light more brisk and vivid, or more copious and extensive, than another*: But we could never possibly perceive *Blue and Yellow*, or any other distinction of (what we call) *Tincture and Colour*; either in the Rays of Light themselves, or the Bodies that reflect them to us. For this *Distinction of Tincture*, is what in the nature of things suits

no more with *swift* and *slow*, or *great* and *less*, than it does with *Space* or *Time*, or with *Length*, *Breadth*, and *Thickness*. And therefore I say, that our Perception in this Case, is a *Phenomenon*, that's infinitely foreign, and remote from all Reaction or Modification of a corporeal Organ. A Perception we have; but *what 'tis*, and *of what*, and *how* produc'd, we know not: only this we know, that we find a difference as to *something*. And this is but one Instance of many, relating to plain Matter of Fact in Nature, which I could produce (if 'twere worth while) to demonstrate how *impossible and absurd this Hypothesis of Sensation is*.

But there's enough said of a *Blunder*: and all that I have to excuse my saying so much upon it, is, that I think 'tis one of the most celebrated ones that has appear'd upon this Subject; and that I hope something or other that has been hinted here, may lay a Foundation for a Confutation of other Attempts, towards a Mechanical Solution of this sort of Problems.

I shall only observe further upon this head; *viz.* That if SENSATION it self cannot be the mere *Phantasma*, or effect of the Reaction of the Sensory, that is, its *Motion ad extra*; then neither can MEMORY be the mere Result of an apt *Disposition of Organs*, to preserve or retain the *Motion impress'd by external Objects*; but must necessarily be a Power, far transcending all the Actions, Efforts, or Affections of Matter, either to cause, or account for it. Upon what score soever, it is impossible that we should PERCEIVE mechanically; upon the same (at least) it is impossible, that we should REMEMBER, by virtue of the same Principles.

## P R O P. IV.

**I**F *Matter be capable of Thought and Volition, then innumerable Properties and Affections relating to the Motion and Action of Bodies, which now pass for Demonstrated Truths, may possibly be, all of them, precarious and false.*

We demonstrate in *Mechanicks*, that such and such Portions of Matter, with such *Forces*, or at such *Distances* from a *fixed Point*, ought exactly to ballance one another, and remain in *Equilibrio*. And in *Hydrostaticks*, that *Liquids* ought to stand at such determinate Heights in *Tubes*; or that *Solid Bodies immers'd* in them, ought to keep precisely such or such Places and Positions.

It has been demonstrated likewise (with no less Evidence than either of the former) that the larger *Systems of Matter in the Universe*, observe exact Order and Method in their *Revolutions*; and that, as from certain Laws and Principles, they ought to describe *Curve-lines of such and such Figures and Dimensions*, and be liable to such and such particular *Irregularities*; so they do in Fact always continue to describe the same Lines, and present us with the *same Set of Phenomena*.

Now if Matter be a Substance that can *Think and Will*, then all these things which pass as the Subjects of common Observation, and certain Demonstration too, may notwithstanding be altogether doubtful and uncertain, nay absolutely false and wrong. For the *Intelligent and Designing* Parts of Matter may shift their *Positions*, or put themselves out of those *Directions*, which by the receiv'd Laws of Motion they ought to keep in. They may make arbitrary Efforts a-  
gainst



gainst the Pressures and Endeavours of neighbouring Particles; and by those intestine Colluctations with each other, prevent or alter the Effects that ought to arise. They may dispose themselves to Stops and Pauses, or to *irregular Accelerations and Retardations of their Motions*, going on with degrees of Velocity, infinitely disproportional to the Forces impress'd. So that the World may be notoriously out in all that relates to the *Ponderation*, the *Collision*, and *Resilition* of Bodies, the *Impression and Communication* of Motion, the Tracks or *Semite* which Bodies describe, and the *Forces* they move with therein; if Matter be endow'd with *Counsel and Design*. And the plain truth on't is, he that sees how oddly the Parts of Matter do in some certain Cases dispose of themselves, how they jostle and squeeze one another, and force themselves into the way of the *rudest Smokes* and *heaviest Pressures*; would be tempted to think their *Understanding* but little, and their *Prudence* less.

If any one should argue here, that Matter may be a thinking Substance, and yet all the demonstrated Laws of the Motion and Action of Bodies on one another, may notwithstanding be infallibly and universally true; namely, because God Almighty has appointed and ordain'd, that they should always take place, and has set the great Machine of the World together in such a manner, that they must necessarily do so:

I answer in one word, The plain meaning of that is this; viz. That God has made Matter a Thinking Substance, and yet dispos'd things so, that all the necessary Effects of Thought and Counsel, should be for ever impossible. He has made it capable of willing and contriving; but to no other purpose, nor no other end, than barely to be able to will and con-



trive, in a sluggish inactive State, under invincible Confinements and Restraints. Let those that think to solve the Argument this way, therefore, consider how they will reconcile this, to *that infinite Wisdom and Prudence*, of which they have such plentiful Demonstrations in the whole Frame of Nature; where, after all their exactest and most curious Enquiries, they'll not be able to find the least Appearance of any such imprudent Step, as *making one thing to thwart and cross another; or giving Powers to any Being, that should be actually frustrate and void, by virtue of some other general Law.*

If they can do this, I shall easily give up the Argument as lost: otherwise there is no Remedy, but it will and must conclude, *that (in Fact) Matter is not a Substance endow'd with Thought and Counsel.* Q. E. D.

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## S E C T. V.

AND thus we have consider'd what Matter and Motion are able to do, towards the Production of the *Phenomena* of Intelligent Substances; and *what signs there are in the Universe*, of its being a thinking Substance it self.

In short, by all *Observations and Trials*, Matter does not think; and by *Demonstration*, it cannot think, by virtue of any of the *known Properties* of it. Nay, Matter is evidently subjected to such Laws, as make it impossible *that it should think*, by virtue of any of those Properties or Affections which are actually discover'd to us. So that I hope, the *first Article* propos'd, may be pretty well clear'd: And this (as I said before)

fore) is the main point of all, and that which will give the most effectual stroke towards the compleat Determination of the Question in hand. I shall now therefore, according to the Order of the Method propos'd, enquire,

2. *What Strength and Weight there is in that Allegement, of certain possible UNKNOWN Powers or Affections of Matter, from whence Thought and Volition may arise; tho it be allow'd that they cannot proceed from those Properties and Affections which are KNOWN to us.*

And the plain truth of the matter is, there is nothing but mere Shuffling and Evasion in't. 'Tis an absolute downright precarious Assertion, and seems to be calculated purely for a Refuge, when the former part of the Hypothesis, should plainly appear to be no longer defensible. What an egregious Jest is it, for a Man to reply, and say in such a Case as this, *Matter may have innumerable Properties that we are perfectly ignorant of; and by virtue of those Properties it may be able to think?* I would fain know what Argument there is, that may not be evaded by such a *licentious way of supposing* as this! A Man might make mad work in *Philosophy*, and advance the most monstrous Paradoxes in the World, under the Protection of this Method of appealing to the UNKNOWN POWERS and PROPERTIES of Bodies. If I had a mind to assert the oddest and most surprizing things that can be thought of, concerning some *natural Bodies*; provided they were such as did not contradict either *plain Sense* or *Demonstration*, I would go this very way to work, arguing from the hidden Properties and Virtues of Matter, *which might be able to produce such and such Effects, tho all that we knew of Matter could not do it.* And at that rate, all Nature

might be turn'd into Banter ; and a Man might make any thing of any thing, according to his own Fancy : Nor cou'd any *Deist* that stands by *this Hypothesis*, ever possibly answer one of those Arguments, tho ever so ridiculous.

I make no difficulty of allowing these Gentlemen, that it is indeed a thing simply *possible in it self*, that Matter may be endow'd with some other Properties, than are actually known to, or discover'd by us. For as we do not see into the *intrinsic Natures and Essences of things* ; so neither do I know of any *strict and perfect Demonstration*, by which the simple Impossibility of this can be made out. But what then ? I hope the *bare Possibility* that it may be so, is not, in the nature of things, a warrantable ground for *Surmise and Suspicion* that it is so. Perhaps you'll say, you don't suspect that it is *actually so*, but only that it *may possibly* be so. But what an idle and useless Suspicion is that ? How ridiculous is it, for People to amuse themselves and others, with mere Peradventures and Surmises of this, and that, and t'other thing, that *may possibly be* ?

The Question is, Have you any *Hints or Intimations* from the Universe, or any thing in it, that Matter has Properties, quite different from those which we are acquainted with ? Do you see any thing like a *Sign or Symptom* of it, in the nature of things abroad ? This indeed would give your Conjectures some tolerable face of Reason : whereas to go on guessing and surmising, upon *bare simple Possibility*, and your own *Ignorance*, or rather *Nescience*, of what neither concerns you to know, nor perhaps is ever possible to be known by you, or any other Creature besides (I mean *the inward Essences of Things* ;) this is all over *Humourism and Arbitrary*, nor is there

there any other account to be given for't, but such a one as will never stand good in Nature and Reason; viz. *that you do it, because you will do it.*

But after all, suppose we allow you your Suspicions of several possible *unknown, and quite different Properties of Matter, from any that we are now appriz'd of*: You come on again with a fresh Suspicion, *that these Properties may some of them be such, that Matter may be able to think by virtue of them.* Whereas the Discourse being of Properties that neither you nor we know any thing of, you can have no more ground to suppose, that any of all the unknown Properties of Matter are such as are *just fit for your turn*, namely to make Matter a thinking Substance; than we can have to suppose the contrary. *Matter may possibly be invested with ten thousand Properties, different from all that we know of; and yet none of them all may be such, as may render it capable of Thought and Reflection.* But your Business requires you to suppose such Properties and Affections in Matter, as are capable of rendring it a *conscious thinking Substance*, as you would have it to be; that is, you'll suppose every thing that's proper to answer your own purpose, without offering any thing that looks like Reason or Proof for it: in which you can expect no more Credit from the rest of Mankind, than the rest of Mankind believe you give to your selves, while you offer such wretched precarious Hypotheses (as these are) to their Consideration.



## S E C T. VI.

3. **A**S for the next thing alledg'd, *viz.* That God Almighty, by his infinite Power, and out of his own Good-pleasure, may or does endow Systems of Matter with the Faculties of Thinking and Willing: It appears to me, to be so very little to the purpose, that I can't but wonder that any Persons should ever insist on it.

In the first place, 'tis an idle and a vain thing to go to disputing upon the possible Effects of Divine Power; and it looks as if Men were conscious to themselves, that they had nothing left to say, that could signify any thing; when they put an Argument upon such a foot as this, that Omnipotence may make things to be as they affirm.

Besides, this is a *Quibbling and Ambiguous way of Talking*; and at best, seems intended only to puzzle the Cause.

God may endow Matter with a Power or Faculty of Thinking!

The meaning of which must necessarily be one of these two. Either——

First, That Matter continuing only what it is, according to our best and clearest Ideas of it (*viz.* a solid Substance, capable of Division, Figure, Motion, and the Effects of these, and their Compositions or Combinations) God Almighty may, by his Infinite Power, cause Thought and Volition to arise or result from these very Properties and Affections; or from the Nature of Matter, as endow'd with these Properties: And so, in that Sense, be said to invest it with a Power of Thinking.



Or, *Secondly*, That the Faculty of Thinking and Willing, is not any thing resulting from, or educ'd out of the mere Powers of Matter; *but something of a distinct and separate Nature, super-induc'd or superadded to it, by God*: who in this Sense therefore, makes it a Thinking Substance, only as he joins along with it a Power of Cogitation, which is quite *foreign to Matter*, and all its Properties.

As for the *First* of these, I argue thus; It does not at all derogate from Infinite Power, to say, *That it cannot make both Parts of a Contradiction to be true.*

Now Matter continuing to be only what it is, according to our best and clearest Ideas of it, *viz. a solid Substance, capable of Figure, Motion, and Division*, with the Effects and Combinations of these: It is impossible, by all the Laws of the Universe, that Matter should Think and Will; as we have already demonstrated.

And therefore, since God Almighty, as the Author of Nature, has establish'd such Laws, that by virtue of them, and while they continue in force; it is absolutely impossible, that such *Phenomena* as Thought and Volition, should result from any of the Properties and Affections of Matter: We may safely conclude, whilst Matter continues to be such as it is, according to our best Ideas of it (that is, endow'd with such Properties, and subject to such Laws) that even Almighty Power it self cannot make it to be a Thinking Substance, in this *first Sense*: *For that would be the same thing, as to make it a Thinking Substance, at the same time, and by virtue of the very same Principles, that it is made impossible for it to be a Thinking Substance by.*

*Secondly,*

*Secondly*, If a Thinking Power or Faculty, *essentially distinct* from all the Properties and Affections of Matter, or any possible Effects and Compositions of them; be *superinduc'd*, or *superadded thereto by God*: I would ask then, Why these Gentlemen can't as well allow a THINKING SUBSTANCE, *specifically distinct from Matter*?

Where are the odds; but only in the Consequences of this latter Concession, with respect to a FUTURE STATE? And in that respect, I confess there are some odds. For 'tis easier to conceive, how a THINKING SUBSTANCE may be liable to *Pain and Punishment*; than how a mere POWER or FACULTY should be subject to any such thing. This (a Man may fondly tell himself) may be lost, and dissolve into nothing, he does not know how; whereas, the Notion of a *real Cogitative Substance*, seems to involve a sort of Stability and Permanency, that gives a much worse prospect with respect to *HEREAFTER*, than the former does.

But notwithstanding all the Absurdity and Unintelligibleness of the Talk of a Power or Faculty, that is not actually the Power or Faculty of *some particular Being or Substance, of the same Specifick Nature with that Power*: yet this very Concession, of a Thinking Capacity or FACULTY, *essentially distinct from all the Properties and Affections of Matter*, does as effectually thwart and overturn all the Schemes of a *Materialist*; as that of a Thinking SUBSTANCE would do. For this being granted, 'tis evident then, that there is something in Nature (call it *FACULTAS, VIS, POTENTIA*, or by what other Name you will) that IS NOT MATTER, nor does not result from any of its Properties, *nor is not any way allied or related to them*: And that this

is

is likewise the *sole Cause* of an infinite Number of ACTIONS and OPERATIONS, which are beyond comparison more noble and curious than any that we see perform'd by *Bodies* about us. And he that will call this a POWER, and grant nothing of a SUBSTANCE in the Case, may trifle and play with Words if he pleases; but all Mankind besides, will plainly see, it is *but playing with Words*. However (I say) even upon *this Supposition*, the Cause of Matter and Motion is entirely at an end, and we must hear no more of those *fine Speculations and Hypotheses*, that us'd to be advanc'd to us upon this Subject. *Something there is specifically distinct from Matter, in the Universe*: and that being granted, there is enough granted, both to spoil all their *Systems*, and shew that they do but trifle, when they deny the Existence of an IMMATERIAL SUBSTANCE.

In short, as for this Notion, of *God's endowing Systems of Matter, with the Powers of Thinking and Willing*; we see that it amounts to just nothing at all.

Take it *one way*, and it is *impossible*, even to Infinite Power it self; while the present Frame and Constitution of the World are maintain'd.

Take it the *other way*, and you do by Consequence give up the whole Cause. Now in one of *these two Senses*, it must unavoidably be taken; for there is no third Sense, nor no possible Mean betwixt these two.

But after all, without laborious arguing upon the Business; suppose I should ask any one, that told me in the general, that God did of his own good Pleasure, endow Matter with the Faculties of Thinking and Willing; I say, suppose I should demand the Grounds and Reasons of his Assertion, *and how he would make it out to me*  
*that*

*that it was so*: What account would he give me of the matter? Should I have any thing that look'd like Proof for't? I dare say no Man would pretend to convince me of it, by ACTUAL EXPERIMENT; and I am very sure, he cannot give me DEMONSTRATION for it. And must I take the arbitrary fantastical GuesSES and Surmises of a Person (that has a mind Matter should think, and the Gospel be a Cheat) for Proof, in such a Case as this? With all the same Right and Reason that he tells me, *God has superadded such Faculties as these, to Systems of Matter*; I may tell him, that some sort of Matter can *Think*, and not *Will*; that another has *Inclination*, but no *Judgment*; that another has both the former, but no *Reflection* nor *Remembrance*: That one body has *three*, another *ten*, and another *two hundred* several Modes or Ways of *Sensation*. And who (upon our *Deists Principles*) could ever disprove a Man, that should insist upon such whimsical Notions as these are? Nor do I think that it would be at all, any thing of an immodest Challenge, to offer to make out any one of them all, that should be demanded; when they have given fair and satisfactory Proof, *that God Almighty has* (in any of those Senses that we oppose) *endow'd Systems of Matter, with the Faculties of Thinking and Willing*.

And thus much may suffice for that *third Thing* also.



## S E C T. VII.

**H**AVING now shewn, that *Matter cannot Think*, by virtue of any of those Properties and Affections, which compose our Idea of the Nature of it; as also, that what's alledg'd, about some *possible unknown Properties* of it, by which it may be able to *think and will*; and of *God Almighty's investing it* with those Faculties, by his Supreme and Sovereign Power; that this (I say) is nothing but *mere arbitrary Hypothesis and Subterfuge*, and for that Reason, to be allow'd no farther Place nor Consideration in the Argument, than only to be as positively deny'd, as it is precariously asserted: I shall now deduce some *Corollaries*, that follow more immediately from the foregoing Discourse; and then proceed, to make some farther Application of it another way.

Coroll. 1. *A THINKING Substance, as such, cannot possibly be a MATERIAL one.*

Coroll. 2. *Unless therefore, there be any MEAN sort of Substance between MATERIAL and IMMATERIAL, or some, that is SPECIFICALLY DISTINCT from both; it is so far from being Impossible, that there should be such a thing as IMMATERIAL Substance; that on the other hand, it is certain to a Demonstration, that there are such Substances; and that THINKING and WILLING are necessarily the Powers of IMMATERIAL, and ONLY of Immaterial Substances.*

And



And because, I believe, no Man will pretend to demonstrate, either the *Actual Existence*, or the *Possibility* of a MEAN sort of Substance between MATERIAL and IMMATERIAL, that is, between MATERIAL and NOT MATERIAL; or any, that is SPECIFICALLY distinct from both: Therefore we may put the *Corollary*, out of the *Hypothetical* Form, and say *absolutely*, that there are *Immaterial* Substances, and that *Thinking* and *Willing* are necessarily the Powers of such, and ONLY of such Substances.

Coroll. 3. *THINKING* Substances, cannot be liable to the same Changes and Vicissitudes, that *MATERIAL* Ones are liable to.

I enter not at all into the Enquiry, *What* Changes, *Thinking* Substances may in any respect be liable to; but I say, that they can't be liable to such, as pure *Material* Ones are obnoxious to.

Coroll. 4. Therefore if a *THINKING* Substance be join'd to a *SYSTEM* of *MATTER*; the *Dissolution* of the one, is by no means a Consequence of the *Dissolution* or *Destruction* of the other: But the *FORMER* may continue, not only to *EXIST*, but to *ACT* and *OPERATE*, when the Union between *IT* and the *LATTER* ceases.

Coroll. 5. Brutes are not mere *AUTOMATA*, or *MACHINES*.

The reason is, because their *Actions* plainly shew *Thought* and *Design*: and one may venture to account, every whit as well, for most of the ordinary *Actions* of Mankind, by mere *Clock-work*; as for some *Actions* of these Creatures, which we call *Irrational*.

\* *Naturæ*

\* *Natural History* (nay, *common Observation and Experience*) will furnish sufficient Proofs of this. And I dare say, a Man that consults these, will find Arguments enough in *one* silly Animal; to confute all the Systems of the wisest Philosophers, that have written Books to prove them to be *mere Machines*.

A noted Disciple of *Des-Cartes* (following therein his Master's Steps) has taken the pains to do this, in a peculiar Treatise†; but methinks there is some want of *Reason* in the *Book*, as well as of *Sense* in the *Subject* 'tis writ of.

There have been *Poets* ||, that have had better Notions of *these Creatures*, and treated them much more civilly, than some of our modern *Philosophers* have done. And if they don't expressly attribute *Reason and Understanding* to them (at least *such Reason and Understanding*, as *Man*

\* *Ælian*. Var. Hist. lib. 1. cap. 2, 3, 4, &c. and abundance of Modern Authors, have given very particular and surprizing Relations, of the Ingeny, Prudence, and subtle Contrivance, of divers Sorts of Animals.

† *Le Grand*, de carentia sensus in Brutis.

|| *Essè Apibus partem Divinæ Mentis, & haustus Ætherios dixere. Deum namq; ire per omnes Terrasq; Tractusq; Maris, Cælumq; Profundum. Hinc Pecudes, Armenta, Viros, Genus omne Ferarum, Quemq; sibi tenues Nascentem arcessere Vitas.*

*Virg. Georg. 4.*

So again,—*Principio Cælum & Terras, camposq; liquentes  
Lucentemq; Globum Lunæ, Titaniq; Astra  
Spiritus intus alit; totamq; infusa per Artus  
Mens agitat Molem, & magno se corpore miscet;  
Inde Hominum Pecudumq; Genus, vitæq; Volantum,  
Et quæ Marmoreo fert Monstra sub aqore Pontus.  
Igneus est illis Vigor, & Cælestis Origo  
Seminibus.——Virg. Æn. 6.*

is endow'd † with) yet they shew plainly enough, that they believ'd them not to be mere Matter, aptly set together with Springs and Wheels, and other Instruments of Motion; but to be really inform'd, by some *Principles of Celestial Life and Vigour*. And I observe, by the way too, that those People, who are so fond of making MEN as well as BRUTES, nothing but mere Matter and Motion; have the Sense of *Former || Ages* against them, as well as the Reason and Demonstrations of the *present Age*.

Nor do I at all believe, that the reason why any of the most considerable of the old Poets or Philosophers talk'd upon this Subject of *Human Nature*, in a Stile so very different from that of our modern *Deists*; was, because they were less wise and knowing than the latter are; but because, together with (at least) as much Know-

† ——— *Atqui adeo Venerabile soli  
Sortiti Ingenium, divinatorumq; Capaces;  
Atq; exercendis, capiendisq; Artibus apti,  
Sensum à Cœlesti demissum traximus arce,  
Cujus egent prona & Terram spectantia; Mundi  
Principio, indulgit communis Conditor illis  
Tantum ANIMAS, nobis ANIMUM quoq;*

Juv. Sat. 15.

|| *Hipparchus* nunquam satis laudatus, ut quo nemo magis approbaverit cognationem cum homine syderum, *Animasque nostras partem esse Cœli*.

Plin. lib. 2. cap. 26.

————— *Divinae particulam Auræ.* Horat.

Nam cum cæteras animantes abjecisset ad pascuum solum hominem erexit, ad cœlique quasi cognationis & domicilii pristini conspectum, excitavit.

Cic. de Legib. lib. 1.

Which Lines are (as one may say) only put into Verse by Ovid, where he says,

Pronaque cum spectent animalia cætera terram,

Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri

Jussit, & erectos ad sydera tollere vultus. Met. 1.

ledg

ledg and good Sense, they had more Liberty of Thought, and were not cramp'd and bias'd (at least in this Affair) by a *Scheme or System*, as these People are; who having once set up against Christianity, must go thro thick and thin in the way of opposing it, nay even to the very making *Men and Posts* the same sort of Substances.

However, 'tis certain they are equally mistaken, both in the case of Men and Brutes too.

Even those inferior Animals, are demonstrably of quite another sort of make, than they would have them to be.

Those *Comparisons and Reflections upon things*, which 'tis plain they make, tho but obscure and indistinct, with respect to ours; do yet amount to what we must call *Reason and Argumentation*, in some degree.

And it is as much as serves all the Uses and Purposes of Creatures, which hold such a Rank in the Creation as they do. 'Tis enough to qualify them for all those Offices of Life, which tend either to their own Ease and Good, or the Advantage of Mankind who make use of them.

Notwithstanding this, together with some share of *Mind or Intelligence*, they have a much larger degree of *Appetite and Inclination*. This is the most prevailing \* Principle in their Composition, and is by far too strong for the other Faculty to govern and restrain. Nay, *Knowledge and Perception* in these Creatures, as to all that appears to us, seem to be intended chiefly for *guiding the Appetite to its proper Objects, and not for tempering and regulating the Motions of it*.

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\* ——— *Pecora, quæ Natura, prona atque ventri obedientia finxit. Salust. Bel. Catalin. in princip.*



The Case is quite otherwise, with respect to † *Man*; who being endow'd with a brighter and vastly more capacious *Intellect*, is thereby qualify'd, to make more exact and speedy *Reflections* upon things, and to run *Consequences* out to a far greater *Length*; and being able to dictate and prescribe what should be pursu'd, in a more distinct and methodical manner, as also to enforce those *Prescriptions* with a more masterly *Authority* than the other *Creatures* can; is hence, better fitted for the Government of his *Passions* and *Appetite*: and does then, and then only, maintain the Dignity and just *Prerogative* of his Nature above the *Brutes*, when he keeps them in due subjection to his Reason. On any occasion, to give the upper hand to these unruly Powers, is making a Step towards another *Species*; but to be habitually given up to the Conduct of them, is only to be a Brute of finer *Airs*, and better Shape, than the common ones are.

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## S E C T. VIII.

**B**UT to proceed a little further in this Enquiry: As the Operations of *Brutes* are the certain *Effects* and manifest *Signs*, of some Powers, which are not nor cannot be the Powers of mere *Matter*, nor any thing resulting from any of its Properties and Affections; so, there remains but one or other of these two Conclusions to be fix'd

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† *Bestiis autem sensum & motum dedit, & cum quodam Appetitu, accessum ad res salutare, a pestiferis recessum; Homini hoc amplius, quod addidit Rationem, qua regerentur animi appetitus, qui tum remitterentur, tum continerentur. Cic. de Nat. Deor. 2.*



upon, in order to the settling of the point, about their real Nature and Constitution.

For either, they are only pure Machines, acted and inform'd, by one common or *general Soul of the World, which perceives, and thinks, and desires in them*, as so many distinct and separate Parcels or Systems of Matter :

Or else, together with a System of corporeal Organs, they consist of a *real immaterial Substance*, which is individuate and numerically distinct, for each Animal ; which immaterial Principle or Substance, acting in and by the Springs and Organs of the Body, produces all that variety of *Phenomena*, which we observe in their Operations ; just as that which we call our *Soul* does in our selves.

As for the *First* of these ; to suppose Brutes to be in themselves mere senseless Machines, acted and invigorated by a *Common Soul*, that unites it self to all *organiz'd* Systems of Matter, and produces variously (according to the various Disposition and Texture of that Matter) what we call *Perception, Apprehension, Inclination*, and the like : This is such an intolerably whimsical sort of Hypothesis, that it scarce deserves to be argu'd against.

Let him that can *prove* it, produce his Arguments for it: Nay, let him but give some Reasons that may make it only *probable*, that it is so.

In the mean time I shall offer one, that I believe will make it more than probable, that it is not so.

*I take it to be a very plain and clear Case, that WE MEN are not so many particular Machines, inform'd by one common Anima Mundi.*

In that we *Think* and are *Conscious*, we can be sure of some Principle that is not *Matter*, which

is the alone Agent or Cause of that Thought and Consciousness. But then I add ;

*In that we are not mutually conscious, of each other's Thoughts and Consciousnesses ; our particular Thought and Consciousness, is not nor cannot be the effect of some common intelligent Principle, which thinks, and is conscious in us all.*

For I would fain know, why or how the suppos'd Universal Soul, merely by thinking and acting, in one particular System of Matter, should come to be *not conscious*, of what it thinks and acts in another System of Matter ? 'Tis it self, and it self only, that thinks, here, and there, and every where. This and that and the other Man's Thought and Consciousness, is but the *Common Anima* thinking and reflecting upon it self, within so many several *Enclosures or Partitions of Matter*.

I grant indeed, that in this Hypothesis, a Man might with some little shew of Reason, attempt to account for some Differences, in the particular *Ways and Modes of Thinking*, in particular Persons ; viz. upon the score of the different Disposition, Texture, and Configuration of the Organs, which even the same common Soul might be suppos'd to influence very variously, and thereby produce all the *Phænomena* of Slowness and Confusion, of Vivacity, Brightness, and Regularity of Thought, in those distinct Parcels of Matter that are inform'd by it, and are thus variously built and fram'd.

But there's no manner of account to be given, how a *common Soul*, by informing various Systems of Matter, should lose its *General Consciousness* ; or be made not conscious, of what it thinks and acts it self, in each of those Systems.

And

And 'tis not only *unaccountable* how it should be so (for that is not in it self any Argument against the Possibility or Reality of things) but it is *ridiculous and absurd*, to all the impartial Reason in the world, that it should be so; and that I take to be a sufficient Argument against it.

For the *actual numerical Distinction, or Division*, of those innumerable Systems of Matter, which the (suppos'd) *Anima Mundi* cohabits with, and exerts it self in, can't *part or divide it from it self*, or (if I may use such a Phrase) make any *Chasm* in its Essence.

It's still the same *simple undivided Substance*, when thus incorporated with all the Animal Machines in the Universe, that it is or would be, out of that State of Union and Cohabitation with Matter. Otherwise, it were no longer *one Universal Soul*, but an indefinite Aggregate of distinct particular Souls. And for a Man to own that, is not only utterly to relinquish the *present Hypothesis*, of a *common Soul*, but likewise to grant as much, as was at first aim'd at in the opposing of it.

If therefore this *General Informing Principle*, or Soul of the World, notwithstanding the actual numerical Distinction of the several Portions of Matter, it animates and dwells in; be the same simple undivided Substance, that it would be, out of that State of Cohabitation with Matter; then I say, *there cannot possibly be any Interruption of its Consciousness*.

Matter will be no Impediment, no Bar against an Universal Perception and Sensation, throughout all the Systems of it.

That same *Universal Principle of Thought and Consciousness*, which thinks and is conscious, in this or that particular System; will infallibly be conscious to

it self, in another System, that it does actually think and is conscious, in the former.

And therefore we must necessarily, all of us, be conscious of each other's Consciousnesses and Perceptions.

I don't say, that we must necessarily have the very same *Modes* or *Kinds* of Thought and Reflection; or that one Thinking Being must needs be conscious of the very same *Objects*, and after the same manner, that another is.

But what I speak of, is a *Universal Sensation*, or a being conscious of others Consciousnesses, and that upon this score; that (according to this *Hypothesis*) there is one simple thinking conscious Principle, which runs thorow all the Universe; and the Consciousness of any particular intelligent Being, is but the Consciousness of that simple Principle, residing in such or such a System of Matter. And a general Perception or Consciousness is, I am sure, a fair and necessary Consequence from thence. But I am sure likewise, that it is an infinitely false one, and contrary to all Experience, and Matter of Fact in *Human Nature*.

And therefore I say, that with respect to *Mankind*, one may be secure enough, that this *Hypothesis* of an *Anima Mundi*, is a mere Dream.

And those Philosophers (if it be not an *abuse* of the Name, to call them so) who talk at that rate; and pretend to illustrate the matter by little vulgar Similes, such as that of an *Organ*, where the same *Blast* produces a great Variety of Sound, by the mere different Make of the *Pipes*, that receive and emit it: would employ themselves much better, in studying certain and demonstrated Truths, than in inventing, and amusing the World, with such idle Paradoxes.



The different Modifications of Matter (if they consider the thing well) will do them no manner of service here; as I have prosecuted the Argument.

For let Matter be modify'd, or divided, how it will; yet still that will have no influence, to prevent the general Consciousness of a simple Substance, specifically distinct from Matter, and which at most (to talk in these Gentlemens Dialect) only *tunes* those several Systems variously, according to their different Textures and Dispositions.

And I would fain know how or why, *this Tuning of Bodies*, the Difference of whose *Notes* arises only from their own Structure; should hinder the *Intelligent Principle*, which gives the *Blast*, from being every where conscious of its own *Musick*?

If they can set this Point in a clear light, I shall be ready to acknowledg the *Anima Mundi* they talk of; and for the future, look upon my self, only as one of the Pipes of the great Organ of the Universe: which at present I confess I do not.

Now the Use that I make of this Discourse, of a *Universal Soul*, with respect to *Brute Animals*, is this:

Since I find their Structure to be, in the main, the same with that of *Mankind*; in that, besides a Corporeal Machine, they give plain Indications of Powers and Faculties, which cannot result from mere Matter, and must therefore necessarily be the Powers of some *Immaterial Substance*, whatever it be: Moreover, since I can, upon very evident Principles, conclude, that *Men*, a superior Order of Intelligent Creatures, are not inspir'd by one *common Soul*; but on the other hand, that each of those most noble Machines, is animated by its *own proper Soul or Spirit*, which is the undoubted



Principle of all Thought and Consciousness in them: I have all the reason in the World to conclude, that it is thus with *Brutes* likewise; and to acknowledg in their Composition, as well as in that of Mankind, *a particular informing Substance, essentially distinct from, tho' closely united to, a System of Matter.*

And in thus inferring the general Nature and Constitution of these Creatures, from what appears in those of a *higher Class*; I do no more, than what all the *Philosophical People* of the World agree to do, in the like Cases; when from some general Coincidences and Agreements, in the Constitutions and Properties of *Natural Bodies*, they argue them to agree in the rest, or to be, in the main, of the same nature; tho' they do not, or cannot assure themselves, by *any decisive Experiment*, that it is really so. If the Reasoning on one side be just, 'tis so on the other likewise.

Perhaps some may think this Doctrine liable to Difficulties, upon the account of its seeming Tendency, *to infer the Souls of Brutes to be Immortal, or to exist somewhere else, when they cease to act and inform their respective Machines here amongst us.*

But we ought ever to distinguish between pure *Difficulties*, and manifest *Absurdities*; and rather chuse that side, which is attended with the *former*, than adhere to that, which is unavoidably press'd with the *latter*.

To solve the Actions of Brutes by any *Laws of Mechanism*, or without a *Cogitative*, (and in some degree *Rational*) Substance; is plainly impossible. And he that attempts it, goes about the same absurd and senseless Work, as that Man does, who at once pretends to explain all the Phenomena of *Thought*, by Matter and Motion.

What-

Whatever Notion therefore I adhere to, concerning *these Creatures*, I am sure I am not to adhere to this; because *Experience*, *Reason*, and *Philosophy*, do all with one accord remonstrate the contrary.

On the other hand, I make no scruple to own, *that as I know not all the Ends and Purposes, for which Brutes are made, nor all the Uses, which the All-wise and Powerful Creator makes of them in the great System of Nature; so neither do I know, how he disposes of them, when they cease to live, and do us service in this lower World.*

Those that say, *they do not exist, or do not retain their Individuation*; can no more prove what they affirm, than those can, who assert the contrary.

So likewise those, who would suppose them to *pass successively into other Bodies, and make various Revolutions and Circulations thorow the Universe*; have (as far as I can find) no more solid Grounds for what they suppose, than those who believe no such Transmigrations; *but leave them all, in some sort of State, wherein they may more effectually answer the Ends of their Creator's Glory, and the general Perfection of the Universe; than in their present base and servile Condition, they are capable of doing.*

As to these Points (I say) we are all in the dark; only one thing we can be sure of, *viz. that they are not mere Machines*; and another we may be as good as sure of, *viz. that they are not acted by a common Soul.*

## S E C T. VIII.

**A**T Coroll. 4. foregoing, we have infer'd, the *undoubted Possibility of the separate Existence and Operation of Thinking Substances, after the Dissolution of those Systems of Matter, which they once inform'd, and were united to.*

And indeed, if *Thinking Substance be in the Nature of things, intrinsically and essentially different from Material Substance; and (consequently) not liable to be affected with those Changes and Vicissitudes, which Material Substance is liable to:* then 'tis not only possible, but 'tis also very probable and likely, that the one may continue, both to be and to act, when the other is no longer a suitable Companion, or rather a proper Organ or Habitation for it.

For as none of all the Irregularities or Indispositions, a *System of Matter* can be obnoxious to, or even its crumbling into Dust and Atoms, can ever have any direct and proper influence, upon a Substance of so very different a Nature and Properties, as a *Thinking* one is, so as either to deprive it of its Powers of Thinking and Wiling, or to render it incapable of an actual Exercise of those Powers: so there is not the least shadow or appearance of Reason to suspect, that the Author of Nature has any way tied the Being, or Activity, of *Thinking Substance*, to the Being, or regular State and Condition of *Matter*; so that the former should depend upon the latter, and without it should entirely cease.

And

And if there be neither any *Physical* Connection or Dependance, of one of these upon the other, as to Operation or Existence; nor any that is of *Divine Positive Ordination* (as we have no manner of grounds to believe there is) then I think, the least that can be said, is this, *viz. That it is much more than probable, that a Thinking Substance should exist, and retain all its Powers and Faculties, when a System of Matter which it was once lodg'd in, ceases to be in a condition fit for it to exert and display it self in, as it had done before.*

And the truth on't is, the Assurance we may have of this, is the nearest a-kin to strict *Certainty*, of almost any that I know.

Nay, thus far we have absolutely *Positive Certainty* in the case, *viz.* that it must be so, for any influence, **MATTER, OR ANY OF ITS LAWS,** can have to the contrary.

As for the rest, *it depends entirely on the Sovereign Will and Pleasure of Almighty God.* He indeed is able in point of *Power*, and may in point of *Right* and *Justice*, do with us whatsoever he pleases.

But the Question is, What reason there is to expect the Destruction of a Thinking Substance from **HIS WILL**? Without some Discoveries of this, 'tis mere Humour and Whimsy, to pretend to believe or surmise it. We should reckon it infinitely vain and foolish, *to argue a thousand strange Events, in the World of Nature, from God's Absolute Power, without any Reasons to believe that it was his Will, to do so and so.*

And is it not as vain to do it in this Case?

What more reason have I to believe, that *God* will destroy a *Thinking Substance*, or deprive it of its Powers of Thinking and Willing, when it ceases to inform a diminutive System of Matter here;



here ; than to believe, *that he will invert the wise establish'd Order of the Universe, or deprive a vast Number of Bodies, of all their beneficial Properties and Qualities, and render them mere useless and unprofitable Lumps in the Creation, to the unhinging of all the other Parts of Nature, that depend upon their Influence ?*

No Man can *demonstrate*, that he won't do so ; and yet no Man (I presume) believes he will : or troubles himself so far, as to question whether he will or no.

We sit secure and easy as to all Events of this kind, because we can find no manner of Ground or Reason to persuade our selves, that things will be so ; but, on the other hand, have many good Reasons to assure our selves, that they will not.

And tho our Reasonings in this Case, do not amount to *strict and absolute Certainty* ; yet we are under no more Apprehensions, than if we had certain and demonstrative Knowledg, how things would go in the World of Nature, as long as Nature lasts.

And I say, we have all the same Security with respect to God Almighty, *as to the Continuation of the Being and Powers of Thinking Substances* : and this added to the positive Certainty we have of their not being affected by any Changes, Vicissitudes, or Dissolutions of Matter ; we have an Assurance, which is ONLY NOT equal to a strict and absolute Certainty of their future Existence and Operation.

Thus far the Argument runs, upon Principles of pure Natural Reason.

The Gospel-Revelation indeed fully decides the Question, and sets the matter beyond all dispute. But I am now concern'd with those, who will hear no Arguments of that kind : tho with how



how much Reason 'tis that they refuse them, I hope I have sufficiently shewn in *the foregoing Treatise*.

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## S E C T. IX.

**T**HERE's another sort of People, who with respect to the matter of the present Argument, are a sort of *Trimmers*, between Christians and Deists; as not wholly disbelieving a Resurrection and a Future State, with the *Latter*, nor yet allowing Souls to be either happy or miserable, upon the Dissolution of the Body, with the *Former*. These Persons will have it, that the Soul falls into a DEEP SLEEP AT DEATH, *or remains in a still inactive sort of State*, till the Resurrection; and then they tell us, it shall awake out of that Sleep, and be again united to a Body, and enter upon a State of Bliss or Punishment, according to its demerits.

I won't call this *Hypothesis* a Mixture of *Christianity* and *Scepticism*; but methinks 'tis such an ambiguous one, that a Man scarce knows which way to attack it. Here you have the *Elysian Fields* and *Lethe*; the Joys of a future Life set before you, at the end of a long Night of Silence and Forgetfulness. And indeed, if one could be sure the *Hypothesis* were true, the next Question would be, whether it might not be suppos'd, that some of those People were got into their midnight Dreams, or at least began to *nod* before-hand.

It is no strange thing at all, to find even wise and great Men of old, who were strangers to the Gospel-Discoveries, at a loss, what Resolutions to come to, with respect to a Future State. To  
find

find some of them, either wholly denying\*, or else speaking in the most doubtful and timorous manner, of the Existence of Souls after Death; others *questioning*, whether there will be any Sensation of † Good or Evil; and others, allowing Souls to continue for a season ||, but yet to be *Mortal*, tho at the same time confess'd to be but Parts of the *Immortal Soul of the Universe*. (And yet after all, it must be confess'd, there are some |||, who have expressly asserted the Immortality, and future Operations of separated Souls.)

But whatever the Opinions of any of those Writers were, whether Right or Wrong, to hear Men (who pretend some Regard to a Revelation, in which LIFE and IMMORTALITY are so clearly brought to light) arguing for such a sort

\* Φοβερῶτατον ὁ θάνατος, ὡς εἶναι καὶ ἐν τῇ τελευτῇ δοκεῖ ἔτε ἀγαθὸν ἔτε κακόν.

Aristot. Lib. 3. de Morib. cap. 9. And so again to the same purpose, Lib. 1. cap. 11.

Lucan. Lib. 3. Aut nihil est sensus animis a morte relictum, Aut Mors ipsa nihil. —

Marc. Antonin. Imper. Lib. 3. §. 3. Edit. Cantab. 1652. \* Ἐκ τῆς εἰς τὸ ἐπὶ ἔτερον βίον, ἐν δὲ τῇ κατὰ φύσιν, ἐν δὲ ἐκείνῃ εἰς δὲ ἐν ἀναισθησίᾳ, παύσει τῶν καὶ ἡδονῶν ἀνεχώρητος. Lib. 7. §. 32. Περὶ θανάτου, &c. ἡτοι σέσις, ἢ μετάστασις. Et alibi passim.

† Senec. Epist. 63. Pag. 491. Edit. Antwerp. 1632. Fortasse, si modo sapientum vera Fama est, recipitque nos locus alius; quem putamus periisse, premissus est. And much to the same purpose again, in Epist. 24. Mors nos aut consumit, aut emitit: Emissis meliora restant, onere detracto. Consumptis nihil restat; bona pariter malaque submoti sunt. Pag. 430.

|| Τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀιδιτηκὴν, ταύτῃ δὲ εἶναι τὸ συμφυὲς ἡμῶν πνεῦμα, διὰ τὸ καὶ σῶμα εἶναι, καὶ μετὰ θάνατον ὀπρῶνται, φθάρειν δὲ ὑπάρχειν, τὴν δὲ ἡσυχίαν ὀπρῶνται, ἥς μέρη εἶναι τὰς ἐν ταῖς ζώοις. Diog. Laert. in Zenon. Lib. 7. Pag. 201. Edit. Lond. 1664.

||| Sallust. Philos. Cap. 8, 21. Lib. ὡς θεῶν καὶ κόσμου.

of Scheme as this, does, I confess, appear to me to be very odd and strange. However, to make short of this matter, I shall lay down the following Conclusions.

First of all, *That this Doctrine of the Soul's sleeping at Death, is certainly contrary to the plain and express Discoveries of the New Testament: and therefore, that if that Book be a Divine Revelation, the said Doctrine is undoubtedly false; and consequently, those who believe it, do, whatever they pretend, in reality either not believe the Divine Authority of the New Testament, or else are not well appriz'd (either thro Ignorance, Inconsiderateness, or inveterate Prejudices) of the Weight and Force of those Proofs, by which the contrary Doctrine is there establish'd.*

This Point will be effectually made out, by evincing the Truth of *this Proposition*; which might be easily and abundantly done, from various Texts of Scripture, viz. *That the Writers of the New Testament, do in their Reasonings so far suppose and take for granted, not only the bare EXISTENCE, but also THE ACTIVITY, and UNIVERSAL OPERATION, OF SEPARATE SOULS, BEFORE THEIR REUNION TO THEIR RESPECTIVE BODIES AT THE RESURRECTION; that without this, there is neither any Force or Consequence in their Arguments, nor any good Sense to be made of what they say.*

I shan't stand either to repeat and transcribe, or to make long Arguments here, upon those Texts of Sacred Writ, which serve to clear up this Point. 'Tis enough for my purpose, just to hint, and make some short Application of a few of them: as remembring, and desiring these People to remember too, that one single evident Text is enough to decide the Controversy.

How

How therefore, in the first place, could St. *Paul* say (upon the *Hypothesis* of *Sleeping*, or lying in a lethargick unactive State, till the *Resurrection*) that *for him to die, would be GAIN?* Let it be consider'd :

That the Period of Time between his Death and the Resurrection, was a *fix'd* and *settled* Period, tho the Duration or Length of it was ever so much unknown to him.

That the more time he got from the *General Sleep*, to serve in the great Work of the Gospel here, the more Opportunities and Advantages he had, for increasing his Reward, and adding to his Crown of Glory hereafter.

That he had our Saviour's Presence, and the Comforts of the Holy Ghost in all his Work and Labours, and that in a very eminent and high Degree.

Lastly, That tho he knew perfectly well all the Defectibility, and all the actual Defects and Imperfections of human Nature, and even of God's Grace as implanted therein; as likewise all the Dangers and Temptations he was liable to: yet 'tis plain, by all the Tenour of his Writings, that he had a firm and settled Persuasion, that he should triumph over all at last, and obtain the blessed End of his Faith and Hope.

Now, if this be so; I would fain know, How could it be GAIN: or rather, How could it be otherwise than LOSS to him to *die*; since Dying was sinking into a State of utter *Insensibility and Incapacity* either of doing or enjoying here in the present World, or making any Steps towards heightning his Felicity in the World to come? It's evident, that if I must be debar'd of the Enjoyment of an Happiness for such a Term  
of



of Years, be it what it will, and in the mean time, have *two several States* or Conditions before me; *one* wherein I can bestir and exert my self, and together with tasting many refreshing Comforts, contribute to the Increase of my future Fortune and Advantages; and *another*, wherein I must lie wrapt up in profound Sleep and Silence: It's evident, I say, that the more Time I get to stay in the former of those Conditions, the more I advance and get ground upon the grand Period of Sleep and Inactivity, and am therefore in reality so much the more a GAINER.

And yet the Apostle says expressly, that for him to *die*, that is to go away, even from such a State and such Circumstances, would be GAIN. For which Reason, I conclude, he had no Notions at all of a *long Sleep* in this literal Sense.

The only Answer that I am apprehensive of here, is this, *viz. That while the Apostle was in the World, he was under a Possibility of falling away from God's Grace, and so of losing all; whereas, by Dying, tho he neither acted nor enjoy'd any thing, yet he was secure from the very Possibility of a Defection.*

But I am apt to believe, this Reply involves and supposes something, which no Person, if it were put upon him, could ever fairly make out. We know nothing of the Degrees of Possibility or Impossibility, with respect to any State of Vertue or Goodness whatsoever. 'Tis Foundation enough for me, to shew the Invalidity of this Reply upon; *that such Supplies of Divine Grace and Strength, may go along with good Men in their Work here in the World, as may effectually correct and prevent all the ill Effects of those Principles in them, that naturally tend to a Defection,*



*notwithstanding all the allow'd Possibility of the thing it self: and I hope there is nothing that either relishes of Fatality, or tends any way to the Prejudice of Human Liberty, in such an Assertion as this.*

And therefore, notwithstanding that such an Event as a Defection was *simply possible in the nature of things*; yet the Apostle all along in his Writings, *evidently expressing a most chearful Dependance on, and firm Expectation of the strengthening and preserving Grace of God, to the Period of all his Labours here*; and being to quit such very advantageous Circumstances, as those of the Gospel-Service, and the Enjoyment of Divine Comforts, for an insensible lethargick State; which, *how short soever it might seem to have been at the Morning of the Resurrection, was yet notwithstanding, really and intrinsically, a Loss or Deprivation, of so much positive Good, which might have been enjoy'd in the mean time*: I take it to be very clear, laying all these Circumstances together, that the Apostle would never have call'd Death a GAIN to him, if he had had any Notions of such a Consequence of it, as what the present *Hypothesis* supposes.

I'll only ask farther;

Is to DEPART and TO BE WITH CHRIST, to enter into a profound Sleep?

Or is BEING PRESENT WITH the LORD, which the same Apostle makes an immediate Consequence of BEING ABSENT FROM THE BODY; the same thing, as lying still, and being depriv'd of all Knowledg, Reflection and Sensation? I don't propose to accumulate Texts of Scripture here, and I am fully satisfy'd, that these are so express and full to the purpose, that after a thousand Quibbles and Evasions,  
it

it will remain unquestionable, that the contrary Doctrine stands *clearly reveal'd in the New Testament.*

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## S E C T. X.

**B**UT, *Secondly*, Abstracting from all that the GOSPEL has discover'd in reference to the matter; I say, *That this Notion, of A SOUL'S ENTRING INTO A DEEP SLEEP; is in it self groundless, and unsupported by any thing of solid Reason and Proof.*

For, 1<sup>st</sup>. That THINKING Substance is essentially and specifically distinct from all MATTER; is evident to a Demonstration. And therefore the sole Rise and Spring of all the Action and Operation of such Substance, *quatenus* THINKING, being solely and purely ITS OWN FORMAL NATURE and POWERS (MATTER, which is an infinitely Heterogeneous Substance, neither contributing nor concurring, any way as an *Efficient*, to the Production of any Action of Thought and Volition, *as such*) 'tis an unavoidable Conclusion; *That the Disunion of a Thinking Substance, from a Portion or System of Matter, cannot possibly influence or cause, that that cogitative Substance, should cease to exert any Act of Intellection or Volition, which it even was capable of exerting, in its State of Union to that Matter.* Indeed (as was hinted before) the *Author of Nature*, may, if he pleases, make a thinking Substance, to be no longer a Thinking, Volitive, or Active Substance, or any Substance at all; but either annihilate, or reduce it to a senseless torpid State, by withholding *that vital Influx*, which is deriv'd

from himself, and is the Life and Soul of all Creatures whatsoever: And this he may do now, or at any time, while our Souls are hous'd in *gross Matter*; and that every whit as well as at Death, when they are separated from it. But to talk of any thing of this kind, as the Effect or Result of the loss of a System of gross Matter; or to suggest as if THE OPERATIONS OF THINKING SUBSTANCE, WITHOUT BODILY ORGANS, WERE DOUBTFUL AND QUESTIONABLE, IF POSSIBLE TO BE AT ALL; is such *idle Unphilosophical Cant*, that 'tis not to be accounted for, but by an extreme Ignorance, or an extreme Fondness for an *Hypothesis*, that pleases, tho at the same time it be demonstrably false. It were a much more pardonable Blunder, if a Man should tell me, *that the Spring of a Watch, taken out of its Relation to a System of little Wheels (which are plac'd in a certain Order and Position one to another) that this, I say, would utterly lose its Elastick Force, and tho ever so much bent and compress'd, yet would not restore it self, because it had not the former little Machines, to exert it self upon, and impart Motion to.* For tho this be evidently false, and I know, that the Spring will still retain its Property of restoring it self, whether it be put to, or taken from a System of Wheels; *because this Property results from its own native Temper and Form, and not from any Relation that it bears to that System, or from the Influence or Agency, of any of the Parts of it:* yet however, 'tis demonstrably more irrational and absurd, to tell me, *that a Soul must sink into a State of Inactivity, for want of a System of Organs, it us'd to exert it self by;* because I am certain, not only that the Actions of Intellection and Volition, *as such,* do not arise from any Relation to, or any Influence

ence and Agency of Matter ; but also, that *the very Substance it self which thinks and wills*, is essentially and specifically distinct from Matter ; and therefore infinitely less obnoxious, to any Change of Property, or Cessation of the Action, of any essential Power, upon its Separation from a System of *gross* material Organs ; than the Machine just now mention'd (*which is of the same Substance and specifick Nature, with every Part it moves*) is to lose its *Temper*, when it no longer performs the Office of a *Spring*, in the System it once gave Motion to. If the one of these would be such a Paradox in *Physicks*, that I should conclude the Man who propos'd it to me, had no other end in view, than only to try whether I were awake, or how credulous I was : the other, I am sure, is such a strange Piece of *Metaphysicks*, and implies such wrong Notions, both of the *Nature of Matter and thinking Substance* ; that 'tis a wonder how Men should venture upon such bold Surmises and Conjectures, in a Case where the Nature of things is plainly against them, and all their Reasonings about it, are founded upon a mere Blunder.

2dly. Suppose I granted these People, that a *System of Matter was absolutely necessary, in order to the Operation and Perception of a thinking Substance* ; yet there were no manner of necessity or occasion for running upon this Hypothesis, of the *Soul's sleeping at Death*. So far from that, that I say, there may be not only a far better account given of the future State of Souls, than what this Hypothesis can pretend to give, but also one that will not be liable to any Objections, either from *Revelation or Philosophy*. For pray, where's the Harm or Absurdity of such a Conclusion as this ? *viz. That when those grosser and more terrestrial*  
113
*Machines,*



*Machines, we call our Bodies, by and thro which our Souls exert themselves in this World, and converse with the various Objects of it; when these (I say) are deposited at Death, that then they are cloth'd upon with other Systems of Matter, which tho very different from these, are yet in all respects adapted and accommodated to the Regions they are placed in, and to their State and Circumstances therein; even as the Frame and Texture of our present Bodies is exactly fitted to the Nature, Uses, and Requirements of the World we here inhabit. I am sure there's no Heresy nor False Philosophy in this; there's nothing little or unworthy of God, nor nothing improbable or unlikely to be, considering the various Successions of Change and Improvement, in all the Works of God throughout the Frame of Nature. And the truth on't is, I can scarce defend my self from believing, that there is no Thinking Substance, except the infinite Being alone, but what is incorporated with some System of Matter; and that 'tis his, and only his Prerogative and Perfection, to be absolutely exempt there-from, and to be in that Sense, as well as others, a Pure Simple Essence.*

So that I say, the Assertors of the Hypothesis we are speaking of, might, without involving themselves in any Difficulties of moment, have kept to the Point of *the Soul's not acting without Matter*, and at the same time have avoided such Inconveniencies, as now they will never be able to free themselves from.



## S E C T. XI.

**I** Shall leave this Head, after I have made one short Remark more relating to it; viz. *That there is nothing at all to be infer'd, with respect to the Future Sleep, or insensible unactive State of the Soul upon its Separation from this Body; nothing of this (I say) to be concluded from those common Instances of People that lie in Swoons and Apoplexies, and such like Distempers; which to all appearance deprive them of all Sense and Knowledge of external Objects, and seem to intimate as if the very Soul it self were become Lethargick, and the Intellectual Powers quite sunk and lost.* I know very well these sort of Examples are sometimes urg'd and made use of this way; but I must needs say, as precariously as all the rest of the Scheme, and to as little purpose. All that can be infer'd with any Truth and Justice from such Instances, is this; viz. *That while the Thinking Substance we call our Soul continues here, at the Will and Pleasure of God, to animate a Machine compounded of such a vast variety of Parts and Organs as our Body is; it's necessary that all the Parts of the Frame should be regularly dispos'd, so as to be capable of discharging their several Functions, according to their proper End and Design, in such a Machine, in order to the Soul's exerting it self as an Intellectual or Thinking Substance, BY, AND THRO, SUCH A CONTEXTURE OF ORGANS:* and that when any of those Parts of the System, which are of the most immediate Use for this end, are so far vitiated and deprav'd, or clog'd and encumber'd, that they are no longer capable of doing the Offices they were intended for;

*then those Operations of the Soul, which by the Laws of its present Union and Cohabitation with Matter, ought to be perform'd thro the Ministration of such and such Organs, cease to be perform'd after that Mode or Manner: and that we do not understand Human Nature well enough, to find out in what manner 'tis that they are perform'd, during that confus'd and irregular State of things in the Machine. This is all that any Man (who proposes to observe any thing of Rule and Reason in his Conclusions) can infer, from the Cases of Apoplectick or other like affected Persons. I say, it will certainly follow, that that Substance which perceives and thinks, can't in such a case make use of the vitiated Organs of the Body, in Acts of Thought and Perception, so modify'd, as when all was in good order. But that it sinks into a Slumber, or becomes incapable of all Action as a thinking Substance, because it wants an Apparatus of well-dispos'd Organs, is so far from being any thing of a just Consequence, that it is a very irregular and wrong one.*

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## S E C T. XII.

**T**HAT some NECESSARY, SELF-EXISTENT, INDEPENDENT, and INFINITELY PERFECT BEING, must have been from ALL ETERNITY, is a Truth that every Man may be as sure of, as he can be of his own Existence.

That the same Being is likewise INFINITELY INTELLIGENT, PRUDENT, SAGACIOUS, and THOUGHTFUL, is not only as inevitably necessary a Consequence as either of the former,  
but

but likewise a thing as palpably evident in its *Effects*, as any thing can possibly be.

Now from hence let us consider what will follow farther.

If it be true in general, that *Thinking Substance* is, and must be, essentially and specifically distinct from *Matter*——

If the *Divine Being* be infinitely and essentially Intelligent — — —

If *Absolute Simplicity* be a necessary Attribute of an infinitely compleat and perfect Being——

If to consist or be made up of *two Substances, essentially and specifically different from one another*; be demonstrably inconsistent with absolute Simplicity——

Then MATTER CANNOT POSSIBLY BE ANY ATTRIBUTE OF THE DIVINE BEING, or any thing of, or belonging to the Divine Essence, *as such*——

Nor can it possibly be true, THAT GOD IS THE TO ΠΑΝ, or the UNIVERSE——

Or, That there cannot be ANY OTHER SUBSTANCE, but God——

Or, That what we vulgarly stile CREATURES, or PARTICULAR FINITE BEINGS, are only PARTS, APPENDAGES, MODES, or MODIFICATIONS OF THE DIVINE SUBSTANCE——

Or, That one Substance cannot CREATE or PRODUCE another——

Or, That one Substance is NECESSARILY INFINITE, and does NECESSARILY EXIST——  
With a vast number of other such like Consequences.

These, I say, can none of them all be true, if the foregoing Argument be true, and its Parts firmly knit together.

And

And let those People, who make any of *these Conclusions* Articles of their Faith, find out where the Defect of it lies. If they will let the whole Dispute turn upon the Business of *Matter and Motion's Thinking*, or of *Thinking Substance not being essentially and specifically different from Matter*; I declare I am most heartily willing to leave it there; and believe these Gentlemen can't do more prudently, than to let the Stress of the Matter lie upon that Head. If they don't fix upon that Article, then what they have to do, will be either to deny——

That the *Divine Being* is an *Intelligent one*——

Or, that *absolute Simplicity* is a necessary Perfection of his Nature ——

Or else to affirm——

That it is not inconsistent with *Absolute Simplicity*, to be made up of two Substances, *essentially and specifically distinct* from one another: Nay, to be an *immense or infinite Aggregate*, of an *infinitely infinite Number of numerically distinct Substances*, under each of the two different Species.

'Tis equal to me, whether they insist upon either of *these three Points*, or else put the Issue of the whole Cause upon the *essential Distinction of Thinking and Material Substance*: provided they do but let it rest somewhere, and will be sure to keep to the Point when they have done.

I shall only add further, that this monstrous System (of *God's being the Τὸ Πᾶν*, or the *Complexion of the whole Universe*) how much soever illustrated and improv'd by *Spinoza* and his Followers; is but a piece of *Antique Philosophy* reviv'd. I don't say, that any Opinions are the worse for being *old* ones, but allow, that in some respects, they may on that account deserve more Credit;



Credit; but what I say is, that the World has only been amus'd with an exploded Figment of some particular Philosophers in former Ages (somewhat cultivated, and put into modern Dress) instead of wonderful Discovery, and demonstrable Truth.

Just as some of our other late Writers, in some particular Doctrines relating to the *Soul*, have only presented the World with another Edition of the *Epicurean* or *Lucretian* System. 'Tis well known that there were People in former days, whose Stile was very near a-kin to that of *Spinoza*, upon the Subject we are talking of. They made us all to be mere \* PARTS and MEMBERS OF GOD; not only to be *from* Him, and  
of

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\* *The Human Soul is stiled by Epictetus, Διὸς μέρϑ.* Differt. lib. 1. cap. 1.

Plutarch explains this yet more particularly: 'Η δὲ ψυχὴ νῦν μετέχουσα καὶ λογισμῶν, ἐκ ἔργων ἐστὶ τῷ Θεῷ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ μέρϑ. ἢ δ' ὡς αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅξ αὐτῷ γέρονεν. Quæst. Platonic. lib. 1. pag. 1001. Edit. Par. 1624.

Marcus Antoninus Imp. is evidently of the same Mind—'Ο δαίμων ὃν ἐκάσω περσάτω καὶ ἡγεμόνα ὁ ζεὺς ἔδωκεν, ἀπόσπασμα ἑαυτοῦ, ἔτϑ δὲ ἐστίν, ὁ ἐκάσε νῦν καὶ Λόγϑ. Lib. 5. §. 27. Edit. Cantab. 1652.

Id. lib. 12 §. 26.—'Ο ἐκάσε Νῦν, καὶ ἐκείθεν ἐρρύηκε.

Seneca is as express as any of them all: Nemo improbe eò conatur ascendere, unde descenderat. Quid autem est, cur non existimes, in eo Divini aliquid existere, qui *Dei* pars est? Totum hoc, in quo continemur. Ἔν Unum est, Ἔν Deus; & Socii ejus sumus, & Membra. Epist. 92. pag. 587.

And Cicero to the same purpose, De Nat. Deor. lib. 1.

But methinks those celebrated Lines of Aratus express a much better Notion of the Deity, than any we find in the forecited Passages. At the same time that he excellently shews the Omnipresence and Imminity of the Divine Being, he establishes a just Notion of our Dependance upon, and Derivation from him, without making us Parts of his Essence.

Ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεθα, τ' ἐδέπο' ἀνδρες ἰώμεθ  
Ἀρρηπν' μεσσί δὲ Διὸς παῖσαι μ' αἴψαι

Πᾶσαι



of Him (which is true in one Sense) but also to be of his very Being and Substance.

And 'twas not a remote Step from hence, to the essential *Unity and Identity* of all Substance, or the *Improducibility* of one Substance by another. For tho these Principles may seem more naturally to infer the former Doctrine of *being Parts of God*, than to be themselves infer'd from it; yet 'tis not uncommon for Men to make *fundamental Propositions*, from certain Conclusions hinted to them; and so by improving and running a Notion up higher, to make the appearance of an entire new Scheme.

As for *this System*, it is not only the *Christian Religion*, but all Religion in general, that is at one stroke overturn'd by it. If there be *no distinction of Being in the Universe*; if all and every thing be *God*, and we are only *Parts or Modifications* of his Substance; then what absolute Nonsense is all the Talk of *Vertue and Vice*, of *Good and Evil*, of *Religion and Impiety*, of *Rewards and Punishments*? What possible meaning can such Terms have, or what room can there be for the use of them in such an Hypothesis as this? Are some Modifications of the Divine Being *Good*, and others *Hateful and Evil*? Is *this Particle* of Him a *Saint*, and the *other* a *Sinner*? Can the distinction of *Happiness and \* Misery* be in

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Πᾶσαι δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀρχαί, μετὰ δὲ θάλασσα

καὶ λιμνῆες· πάντῃ δὲ Διὸς κεχρημένα πάντες·

Τὴ δ' οὐχ ἔτε' νοσ' ἔσμεν. Arat. *Phanom.*

\* *Pythagoras*, qui censuit animum esse, per naturam rerum omnium intentum & commeantem, ex quo nostri animi carperentur; non videt, distractione humanorum animorum, DISCERPI ac DILACERARI DEUM, & cum miseri animi essent, quod plerisque contigeret, tum DEI PARTEM ESSE MISERAM; quod fieri non potest. Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. i. p. 7.

his

his *One* Substance? Does God prescribe *Laws* and give Revelations of his own Will, to himself? Or is he *worship'd*, and ador'd, and serv'd by himself? How can there be any such thing as *Violence and Injustice* in the World? Can one Spark of the Divinity be injurious to another? What Scope is there for Complaint, Accusation, Revenge, or Punishment? Is there War and Confusion in *God*? How is it possible there should be any thing else but Order, Regularity, and perfect decorous Management, amongst the *Parts* of that Being; who if he be at all, must be All Good and Perfect? And if there can be nothing else but what is so; why then does *one Part* correct, chastise, or lord it over another? If no real Faults and Disorders; why is there Smart and Pain? If there be; what then is that BEING, which is made up of such very irregular Members?

In short, there is no possible room, I won't say only for any sort of *Religion*, but not for any Acts of what we commonly call *Morality, Government, or Law*, amongst Mankind, if this Scheme were to be taken as *rigorously true*, and to be truly and closely pursued. And let those People who profess it, distinguish and qualify, and try to evade the Consequence, how they will or can; yet 'tis unavoidable, and they can never fairly get off from it.

I make no doubt, but many Persons in this Scheme are Men of great Probity and Virtue, and prove excellent Members of Society, in whatsoever Station of Life they are: But they must pardon me, if I deny it to be the Effect of the Principles of their Hypothesis; and say, that tho they are very good *Men*, yet they are very bad Scholars of their Master *Spinoza*.

Nor

Nor do I urge this matter of the CONSEQUENCES, as AN ARGUMENT with those Gentlemen, so much, as to shew, how far the Subversion of all Religion may, without any Breach of Charity, be suppos'd to have been the wretched End and Design of the modern Patrons of this Hypothesis, in their proposing it to the World with so much Pomp and Ceremony as they have done.

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### S E C T. XIII.

**G**OD is not the entire System or Comprehension of ALL BEINGS together; but A BEING, within the absolute Infinity of whose simple Essence, all other Beings are comprehended and contain'd; not as PARTS or MODIFICATIONS of his Substance, but distinct EFFECTS of his Power and Will, receiving all from him, and continually dependant on him.

It may perhaps be a considerable Inducement with some People, to admit that odd Scheme of God's being the whole and every part of the Universe; that it does not appear how he can be said to be strictly and absolutely infinite, if there be any OTHER Being but himself, or any Being, which in a proper sense is not himself, or is really distinct from his own Essence or Substance. So that finding it necessary upon other accounts to allow the Attribute of Infinity, and not seeing how this can consist with a distinction or diversity of Substance, they from hence are inclin'd to think themselves secure of the Truth of the other Hypothesis.

But this is all founded upon a palpable Mistake.  
For,

It is not incompatible with strict and *absolute Infinity*, that there should be Substance *distinct from God*, or some Substance *which is not God*.

The Notion of Infinity does not imply BEING EVERY THING, but BEING WITHOUT ANY POSSIBLE BOUNDS OR LIMITS OF ESSENCE and PERFECTION.

And therefore, if the Supposition of *other Substance distinct from God*, does not naturally and necessarily involve and imply any thing that is fundamentally contrary to, or destructive of this; then the said Supposition may consist perfectly well with *that* of absolute Infinity: And consequently those who adhere to the Hypothesis of the ΤΟ' ΠΑΝ, are cut off from all possibility of arguing from that Topick, of the *Inconsistency or Incompatibility* of them.

Now I'll venture to assert, that the Supposition of *other Substance distinct from God*, does not naturally and necessarily involve or imply any thing fundamentally contrary to, or destructive of a true and just Notion of *Infinity*; in short, that there's no manner of Repugnancy or Inconsistency between them.

And the reason of it is plainly thus: Because the *Being or Existence* of OTHER SUBSTANCE, does neither imply any *Circumscription, Contraction, or Limitation*, nor any subjecting of the Divine Being to a possibility or capacity of *Measure or Comprehension*; nor any *Exclusion* of its Essence, Presence, or Activity, in any conceivable or possible UBI whatsoever:

And therefore it's not incompatible with absolute Infinity.

I grant indeed, that if NOT BEING THE VERY INWARD ESSENCE OR SUBSTANCE OF A THING, would necessarily imply or infer



fer SIMPLE ABSENCE or EXCLUSION; or if it would infer the utter Impossibility of an *intimate essential Presence, or COEXISTENCE with the entire Essence of that thing*; that then in this case we should consequentially deny the *Infinity* of God, by asserting the possibility of the Existence of OTHER SUBSTANCE, distinct from himself. But since *not being the very inward Essence or Substance of a thing*, will by no means infer Limitation or Circumscription, Absence or Exclusion; nor will it ever infer the Impossibility, of an *intimate essential Presence, or Co-existence with the entire Essence of that thing*: Therefore we conclude the Possibility of the Existence of *other Substance*, distinct from God; and at the same time, with equal Truth and Consistency, maintain his *Infinity*, in the strictest and most absolute Sense.

On the other hand, 'tis as clear as the Day, that *the Hypothesis of the TO PAN directly overturns the Notion of the Infinity of God*, and consequently subverts that of his *Existence*, and so point-black establishes *Atheism*.

For if TO CONSIST OF PARTS, if TO BE DIVISIBLE, MOVABLE, LIABLE TO CHANGE, ALTERATION, and CORRUPTION, yea to innumerable varieties of *Changes, Vicissitudes, Transmutations, and Corruptions*: If this be in the nature of the thing, inconsistent, or impossible ever to consist with STRICT AND ABSOLUTE INFINITY; then 'tis evident to a Demonstration, that the INFINITE BEING CANNOT BE THE COMPLEX OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE. And consequently those who assert he is so, do (whether ignorantly, or with set design, they know best) set up a Scheme, that has a direct and immediate tendency to subvert all Notions of a Deity, and banish the Belief of his Existence out of the World.



## S E C T. XIV.

**G**OD, *who is infinite and essential Reason, or a THINKING SUBSTANCE, of Infinite and Absolute Perfection; as such, is essentially and intimately present, or does in the most perfect manner co-exist, with the entire Essence of every created Substance.* Upon this account, he is as far from being any how limited or circumscrib'd, or any where shut out or excluded, as if he were the very inmost Essence or Substance, of those created Beings themselves.

The Presence therefore of this *Great Being*, is by no means confin'd to Heaven, or the superior and more noble Regions of the Universe, as *Aristotle* and his Followers made it to be.

Nor is he, as the School of *Epicurus* represented him, *mindless of the Concerns of this lower World*, or an idle Spectator of the Actions and Affairs of Mankind.

Nor has he wholly left the Government and Administration of things to inferior *Demons*, as the *Platonists* and *Pythagoreans* would have it; whose avowed Tenet it was, *quod nullus Deus misceatur homini*. For,

As the KNOWLEDG OF AN INFINITE MIND, IS INFINITE, so likewise are ALL ITS THOUGHTS and CARES.

If there were any Object or Thing, how seemingly mean and despicable soever, that had not a share of its Care and Contrivance, or Government and Disposition; it were no longer an infinite, but a limited contracted MIND, and therefore not a GOD.

There is therefore most certainly, a *PROVIDENCE in the World*, from whose Laws no Creature or Thing can be exempted; by which all things are regulated, order'd, and dispos'd, in the whole Frame of Nature; as well in the *material System*, as amongst *Rational and Intellectual Substances*.

This *Providence* is no other than the unsearchable *Wisdom*, the unalterable *Rectitude*, the impartial *Justice*, the immense *Goodness* and *Benignity* of the Divine Nature, display'd in the Government of created Beings.

As therefore 'tis simply impossible, that there should be any *intrinsic Unfitness or Irregularity* in any of its Dispensations, how strange or obscure soever they appear to us; so 'tis evident that all the Objections or Difficulties which ever were, or ever can possibly be started against this Doctrine, are entirely founded upon, must necessarily arise from, and be ultimately resolv'd into, *the Shallownefs and Debility of a poor finite Mind*, which can no more penetrate into the mysterious Reasons of the CONDUCT OF AN INFINITE UNDERSTANDING, than it can spread into *Infiniteness and Almightynefs*, or become a God it self.

Moreover, all things whatsoever being originally adjusted, ordered, and disposed, by the infinitely wise and profound Thought of the supreme Being; and being afterwards brought forth in *Time*, in their various Orders and Seasons, under his *Direction or Permission*, according to, and in pursuance of, his own most divine and perfect Scheme: Hence we are neither on one side to reckon any Event, to be a *pure Accident or Contingency*; nor on the other, to derive it from *blind mechanical Necessity*, or inexorable FATE in the vulgar Sense; but in all cases to acknowledg and have an Eye to *the Divine Counsels and Disposals*, within the Verge  
of

of which, all kinds of Events are comprehended, how casual and fortuitous, or how necessary and inevitable soever they may seem to us to be.

Nothing has tended more to eradicate all Sense of a Deity out of the Minds of Men, and to extinguish all devout and religious Affections in their Breast towards him; than the wretched Schemes and Notions that have been advanc'd in the World, upon this Subject of a *Providence*. \* *Tully* indeed charges the *Epicurean* Scheme in particular with this; but those of many other Philosophers were certainly as bad. I will not stand to dispute here, whether *Heraclitus*, *Empedocles*, *Democritus*, *Pythagoras*, *Parmenides*, I may add *Leucippus*, *Chrysippus*, and many more besides, did in reality make all human Actions to be the Result of a severe *inexorable Fate*: Some Doctrines of this kind were advan'd amongst them; and 'tis as certain likewise that the *Pythagoreans* and *Platonists*, out of a Fondness for the *Egyptian* and *Chaldean* Philosophy; and in general, all the Admirers of *Astrology*, did too much subject human Actions and Affairs to the *Power and Influence of the Stars*.

The *Stoicks* are commonly charged with binding up the very Deity it self in the Chains of Fate, and consequently destroying all his MORAL GOVERNMENT; and the *Peripateticks* did no better, when they made him either not to act at all, or else to do it, from an *absolute Necessity of Nature*. The *Grand Platonick Year*, and the *Revolution or Circulation*, talk'd of by some of the *Stoicks*, with other Fancies of that kind, all tended to suggest and establish the same loose Notions of a Deity, and his Government amongst Mankind. But put

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\* Cicer. de Nat. Deor. lib. 1.

them all together, and they need no other Refutation than this, that GOD IS AN INFINITELY PERFECT INTELLIGENT BEING. For from hence follows, *an infinitely exact and particular, free, wise, righteous, and merciful Administration of the Affairs of the World.*

This Inspection and Presidency of the Deity, in and over the lower World, was expressly and very consistently acknowledg'd by that same Philosopher before mention'd, \* who argued for the Immortality, and future happy State of separate virtuous Souls. But that a professed *Stoick* † should do it, tho a very great and excellent Man, is I think hardly agreeable to the rigid Principles of the Sect, as they are commonly understood and explain'd. Tho I must needs say, I cannot but think, the Doctrines of that Sect have been much misrepresented, and particularly in this very point of God's Concern about the Affairs of Mankind; since it appears from many Passages in *Epictetus* and *Seneca*, as well as from those just now refer'd to in *Antoninus*, that they firmly believ'd this Doctrine. And the truth on't is, there is (generally speaking) a nearer approach to Christianity, in the *Morals, Discipline, and Dogmata* of that noble Sect, than in those of any other Sect whatsoever.

However, let who will assert it or deny it, it is a most certain and necessary Corollary, from the *Demonstrable Perfections, and Attributes* of a Deity: begin but there, and this of his *Providence and Government* will follow of course.

\* Sallust. Cap. 9.

Phurnutus likewise in his Book *περὶ τοῦ Θεῶν φύσεως*, cap. 2. discourses well upon this Subject, and shews in particular, how upon this very account the Deity was called *Anima Mundi*.

† Marc. Antonin. Lib. 2. §. 11. Lib. 1. §. 17.

## S E C T. XV.

**S**INCE the *Supreme Being* must needs be infinitely and essentially good, as well as wise, powerful, &c. it has been esteem'd no little difficulty to shew how EVIL came into the World. *Unde malum*, has been a mighty Question.

There were some, who in order to solve this, suppos'd (as *Diogenes Laertius*, speaking of the *Magi*, tells us from *Aristotle*) two *supreme Governing Principles* or *Demons*, the one a GOOD, and the other an EVIL and pernicious one: which latter was made independent on, and of equal Power with, the former, and the Author of all that was irregular and bad in the Universe. This monstrous Scheme, the *Manichees* in the Times of Christianity, fell into, and much improv'd; but were sufficiently confuted herein, as well as divers other horrid Absurdities which they maintain'd, by a *Father*, who had reason to be particularly well acquainted with their Tenets, and was extremely well able to expose the Folly of them; I mean the Great St. *Augustine*.

But the plain truth of the Case is, the Hypothesis requires no more in order to its Confutation, than the bare proposing of it. *Duo Summa Principia*, TWO SUPREME INDEPENDENT PRINCIPLES, is next door to a down-right express Contradiction in Terms. 'Tis certain there can be nothing of a *Dogma* more impossible or more absurd. 'Tis the very same Thing in Result and Consequence, as saying TWO ABSOLUTE INFINITES; and he that says *Two*, had as good say *Ten*, or *Fifty*, or any other Number whatsoever.



Nay, if there can be *Two essentially distinct absolute Infinites*, there may be an Infinity of such absolute Infinites; that is as much as to say, none of them all would be an *absolute Infinite*, or that none of them would be properly and really Infinite; for *real Infinity*, is *strict* and *absolute Infinity*, and only that. But 'tis not worth while to argue against so barefac'd an Absurdity as this.

From what has been said in Part II. concerning the nature of *Liberty and Free Will*, we may deduce a very possible and satisfactory (I had almost said, the only just and possible) account, of the *Origin of Evil*.

There are and must necessarily be, *some original intrinsick Agreements and Disagreements, Fitnesses and Unfitnesses of certain Things and Circumstances, to and with each other; which are antecedent to all positive Institution and Law*, and founded on the very natures of those Things and Circumstances, consider'd in themselves, and in their Relations to each other.

As these all fall within the Comprehensions of an *infinite discerning Mind*, who is likewise *infinite essential Rectitude and Reason*; so those on one side must necessarily (to speak after the manner of Men) be chosen or approv'd of by him, as the other dislik'd and disapprov'd: and this upon the score, of the *Eternal Intrinsick Agreeableness and Disagreeableness* of them.

Farther, It was no way inconsistent with, or derogating from, any one Perfection of an Infinite Being, to *endow other Beings which he had made, with such a Power as what we call Liberty*: That is, to furnish them with such Capacities, Dispositions and Principles of Action, that it should be possible for them either to observe, or to deviate, from those *Eternal Rules and Measures of Fitness* and

and Agreeableness, with respect to certain Things and Circumstances, which were so conformable to the Infinite Rectitude of his own Will, and which *Infinite All-comprehending Reason and Penetration*, must necessarily see and discover in the Profundity of its own Essence. Now EVIL is a Deviation, from those Measures, of unerring ETERNAL ORDER and REASON. This is EVIL; not to chuse and not to approve, what is in it self agreeable, and therefore worthy to be chosen, and is accordingly chosen and approv'd of, by SUCH A MIND, and SUCH A WILL, as the Divine. So that, together with a Breach of Intrinsick Original Right and Order; it includes, *a Contradiction or Opposition, to the Reason and Rectitude of an Infinite Mind*, which judges and necessarily approves of that Order.

Now for the bringing this about, there is no more necessary, than the exerting certain Acts of that Power, which we call by the Name of FREE-WILL.

For by this we are enabled to *chuse* or to *refuse*, and can determine our selves to Action and *Practice* accordingly. And when our Choice is made one way, we do what is GOOD; when the contrary, we do EVIL. And therefore, without having recourse to any ill *Genius* or *Demon*, we may fairly and solidly account for the *Origin of Evil*, from the *Possibility of a various Use or Application of our Liberty*: even as that Capacity or Possibility it self, is ultimately founded on the *Defectibility and Finiteness of a Created Nature*.

I can by no means see any just and regular Steps, by which a Man should come to any such Conclusion as this; *That 'tis the Divine Will alone, that MAKES RIGHT and GOOD; or that Things are fit and agree-*

able, only because God wills them, and not that he wills them, because they are really and intrinsically so.

'Tis a mere Jest, to alledg, that otherwise there would be something Prior to, Independent on, and so a Cause of, the Will of God.

GOD'S WILL, IS HIS PURE, PERFECT, AND SIMPLE ESSENCE; in the Immensity of which alone, he beholds all Truth, Order, and Fitness; nor can he possibly have any *Reason or Motive* out of himself, since all is comprehended in his own *Absolute Infinity*. So that to argue any thing of Priority to, or Causality upon, the Will of God; if he *wills* Things because of their Fitness, and does not make them so by *Willing*; amounts to the making a Supposition, that is a flat Contradiction, to the Nature of an Infinite All-comprehending Essence.

For it intimates as if those Agreeablenesses or Fitnesses, were something that was intrinsick or foreign to God, and not what he contemplates in his own Essence. Whereas, 'tis here, in this boundless Perfection, this absolute Immensity, that he discovers all the possible Relations and Agreements of Things; here, I say, where nothing is or can be *prior or posterior, causing or caused*; but all is comprehended in *one view*, and by *one simple perfect Act*. Take the Matter thus, which is certainly the right and genuine Way of taking it; and then I think, there's no room for any Objection that deserves any notice, upon this head.

## S E C T. XVI.

**I**N what Sense soever it can be said or understood, that *Infinite Reason and Infinite Goodness* MUST NECESSARILY contrive, make, and dispose, all things in the BEST Manner, and to the BEST advantage, and for the BEST Ends and Purposes ; in that same Sense ; and *that only*, can it be said, *that it was NECESSARY, the World should be such as it is* ; or that God should contrive, make and dispose of it, and all particular Beings and Events, in and relating to it, in that Order and Manner, that he has contriv'd, made and does actually dispose of it, and them : and in that same Sense likewise, and that only, can it be said, that the Structure and Contrivance of the whole, IS OF ALL, THE BEST, THAT COULD BE ; or *that it could not be any otherwise than it is* ; with many other such like Consequences. A Man may without any Scruple or Hesitation, own and assert *such a Necessity* as this ; and give any *Atheist, Deist or Fatalist* leave, to make their best Earnings of the Concession. For *Necessity which proceeds from PERFECT KNOWLEDG of what is fittest to be done, and from PERFECT GOODNESS and WILL, to chuse what is known to be fittest* ; is infinitely remote from all BLIND MECHANICAL Necessity, and from FATE and DESTINY, in the vulgar Sense and Acceptation of those Words. And as nothing of the *Eternity, or Self-existence of MATTER*, can ever possibly be infer'd from it ; *so neither does it involve any thing inconsistent with a compleat and perfect LIBERTY* ; the Notion of *Liberty* being duly stated, and abstracted from all Imperfections.

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Therefore none of all those People, can ever make any use (in the way of fair and just Reasoning) a Concession of SUCH NECESSITY as this, in order to establish any Notion or Scheme, with respect to the OPERATIONS OR PRODUCTIONS OF A FIRST CAUSE; that will at all clash with any Article that we profess to believe, concerning the Being and Perfections of God: I say, they can't do it, in the way, of *fair and just Reasoning*! For when they once come to *Guesses and Hypothesis*, or mere *Probabilities, Verisimilitudes*, and the like; the Argument is at an end, and we have no more to say. But let them infer what they will, in the *strict and allow'd way* of drawing Consequences; and I believe we need not scruple offering to stand by them.

It is most certain, that the Formal Nature, or Essence of *Liberty*, does not lie in A SUSPENSE, AN INDIFFERENCE, OR INDETERMINATION AD OPPOSITA.

There is no doubt to be made, but that there is such a Phenomenon in Human Nature, as this *Indifference or Indetermination*: And I have shewn expressly in PART II. what Uses we are able to make of it, and how far we can extend and carry it, with respect to Objects that are propos'd to us.

But then, 'tis one thing to speak of an *Effect* or *Branch*, or perhaps an *Imperfection* or *Defect* of Liberty; and another, to speak of the very *Formality* or *Intrinsic Nature* of Liberty it self.

Now we are assur'd, from the *Knowledge and Experience* we have of OUR OWN CONSTITUTIONS, that in a vast Number of Cases that occur, wherein we act from a RATIONAL NECESSITY, and are determin'd only *one way*, by the prevailing Motives of FITNESS, GOODNESS, AND AGREEABLENESS; that yet we ACT  
FREELY,



FREELY, or with a *true and proper Liberty*; and that, because there is all the *Complacency and Delight, all the pleasing Tendency and Acquiescency of Mind, all the Harmony and Consent of Thought*, that we ever experience on any Occasions, wherein we can reckon our selves to act with the truest *Freedom*, or that we can conceive to be necessary, in order to the making or denominating a Power, to be a Power of ACTING FREELY.

If the real Intrinſick Nature of *Liberty*, does not lie here or hereabouts; if this be not ſufficient, in the Nature and Reason of Things, to denominate ACTIONS FREE; then no Actions that WE can ever exert, let them be what they will, can poſſibly be either juſtly REWARDABLE OR PUNISHABLE, BY GOD OR MAN: and if we once come to that, we need not diſpute about *Liberty*, or any thing elſe.

So that I ſay, here we muſt fix, and ſit down with this Concluſion, *That the Divine Being, who acts from Perfect Knowledge, and Perfect Goodneſs and Reſtitute of Nature; is alſo the moſt perfectly and compleatly Free, in all his Operations, and Productions.*

After what has been ſaid here, and in other Parts of this Diſcourſe, I need not ſpend time in demonſtrating, that MATTER CANNOT BE A NECESSARY SELF-EXISTENT SUBSTANCE: Nor that the MATERIAL WORLD, WAS NOT PRODUCED BY A MERE SIMPLE OR ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF NATURE.

For if there be in the Nature of Things, ſuch a Power or Principle, as *Liberty*: If this could no more ariſe from, or be the Effect of *Absolute Neceſſity*, than *Figure* can be the Effect of *Motion*, or Material Extension of ſimple *Indivifiſibility*, or a Power of Thinking can ariſe from, or be made up of,  
that

that which is not thinking: then 'tis certain, that there is *Liberty*, in a Supreme and most Perfect Degree, in that Being which made us Free; even as 'tis also demonstrable, he must be *Thoughtful and Intelligent*, because he has made us so. And if this be true, then I need not say any more to prove, that this Notion of *producing by mere Absolute Necessity of Nature*, is false and impossible, as being utterly inconsistent with the Perfection of that Being.

And then, as to the *Necessary Self-existence of Matter*; the Phenomena of the Universe, are palpable Demonstrations, of the Infinite Absurdity of such a Supposition. I shall only mention one, *viz. The different Specifick Gravity of Bodies.*

Portions of Matter of the same Bulk, are unequally Heavy.

Therefore under the same *Dimensions*, there is not the same *Quantity* of Matter.

Therefore there are *Vacuties*; or Spaces not replete with Matter.

Therefore Matter does not exist *every where*.

Therefore Matter does not *necessarily* exist: For what necessarily exists, must exist every where, and every where *alike*.

Therefore neither is it, a *Self-existent Substance*; nor did it exist from *Eternity*; nor is it any Part or Attribute of the Divine Essence.

The *Mechanical* People, have been often nibbling at this Argument, for proving a *Vacuity*, drawn from the different Specifick Gravities of Matter: but it concludes with too much Evidence and Strength, ever to be shaken, by all their little unphilosophical Attempts; and I make no scruple to assert, that that Phenomenon of the *different Weights of Bodies*, can never be solv'd, by any  
Me-

Mechanical Hypothesis of *Gravitation* whatsoever, let them go which way to work they can.

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## S E C T. XVII.

**T**O conclude all: Such a Being as God is; Infinitely Perfect, *Immense, Intelligent, Just, Free, Good, Provident and Careful*, of all his Creatures; deserves our highest Praise and Admiration, our Love and Gratitude, our Fear and Obedience, our Trust and Dependance.

It's reasonable that we direct all our Actions to his Glory, and make the Serving of Him, the chief Business of Life.

That we be Humble and Modest, in all our Speeches and Conceptions of Him, in all our Reasonings about his *Incomprehensible Essence*, and our Enquiries into his *Ways* and Dispensations.

That we do not oppose our own Understandings, to his *Unsearchable Wisdom*, bring him down to our Schemes and Measures; or conclude that is fittest and most worthy of him to do, that we judg to be best and fittest, in our shallow Capacities, or our *byass'd and prejudiced Judgments*.

*The undoubted and demonstrable Perfections of his Nature, are the only sure NATURAL Foundation for us to go upon, in the way of Thinking and Conceiving of him, and of behaving our selves aright towards him.*

And if from a due and serious Consideration of those demonstrable Attributes and Perfections of his Nature; we shall find it highly agreeable and reasonable to believe, that SUCH A BEING AS HE, should out of his Infinite Love and Care of his Creatures, make any SUPERNATURAL REVELA-

VELATIONS OF HIS MIND AND WILL, in order to the retrieving the Disorders of the World, and making Mankind fully and compleatly happy: then we should be exceeding cautious, how we set up any Schemes or Notions of our own, in opposition to *such Revelations or Discoveries*; and if we have any of us begun to do so, should withdraw from all such Methods in good time, that we may not lose the BENEFIT of what he has REVEAL'D.



F I N I S.

